

For

Eugene D. Genovese

And to the memory of

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese,

With love and gratitude

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This book has an unusual history. It began after a second and unplanned journey to the US in 1983 undertaken mainly to be outside Thailand and safe. My life underground as a pro-democracy fighter had gone to an end, but many of us were advised to leave Thailand while the political situation stabilized as there was no telling what recrimination we might face. The logical choice was for me to spend time studying topics in history since I had been a lecturer in universities. Professor Benedict Anderson of the Southeast Asian Studies Program at Cornell University, who advised me to take the trip abroad, recommended that I study something other than Thai history. He introduced me to Professors Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese who were experts in American history. From then on I began my adventure in studying black slavery in the Old South. For this enlightening journey, I owe a great debt to Professor Benedict Anderson who kindly assisted and supported me in many different ways. From the beginning, Professors Eugene D. Genovese and the late Elizabeth Fox-Genovese enthusiastically supported my study of the Old South. That educational experience was invaluable to the understanding and practice of political and intellectual history not only in the US but subsequently in Thai history as well.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

This is a study of the economic mind of the Old South that focuses especially on the problems of slavery and economic development during the decades of sectional conflict that led to the Civil War. Since the publication of Wilbur Cash's *The Mind of the South* (1941), it has become commonplace for historians of the American South to talk about its "mind" as distinct from that of the North in every major way, including politics, religion, and economics. In general, the mind of the South refers to the active faculty of cognition and feeling of men and women as well to a body of thought, belief, and values of southerners regarding their way of life, their institutions, and the relations of their society to the world. Viewed in its relations to the politics, economics, and culture of the region, the mind of the South thus represents the world view of the slaveholding class, since it was politically the main force in shaping and making such a world view the state ideology.

This study distinguishes between a slave society and a society that had slaves. The underlying criterion is the question of political power and of class rule. The Old South was a slave society in that it produced a slaveholding class capable of ruling a region and of deeply influencing national politics for more than a half a century. With its distinctive culture, religion, economy, and politics, the mature slave society of the South demanded a formulation of a world view, that is, a common understanding and attitude towards life, death, human nature and man's relations to the world. This called for the creation of an intellectual elite of the South. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, a class of intellectuals did exist in the South, and began to develop and express a southern view of the world.¹

Reflecting the paradox of the Old South, the slaveholders' world view embraced visions of both old and new Europe. On the one hand, the world view of the southern planters contained elements of traditional values that prohibited the total reduction of man to thing, of

¹ Lewis p. Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 37.

traditional political thought that stressed the responsibility of the higher order to the lower, and of economic thought that sought to distribute finite resources. On the other hand, the slaveholders' world view also tinged with elements of modern values, political, and economic ideas, which emphasized social progress and equalities based upon private property. Essentially, the southern world view stressed the subordination of the individual to the community in contrast to the capitalist world view that subordinated society to the individual.²

The main characteristic of this outlook thus was its conservatism, and its articulation in the development of the proslavery argument. Historians have expressed perplexity at finding that southern intellectuals--many of whom were men of high intellectual and moral qualities--defended the institution of slavery in every possible way, seeing in it no apparent conflict with their knowledge of modern science, theology, politics, and economics. Moreover, they seemed to be able to reconcile their ideas and professions with the defense of slavery.

In 1936, William Hesseltine explained that the proslavery movement was part of an effort of the slaveholding class to win support from nonslaveholders. Charles Sellers and Ralph Morrow later contended that it was an attempt by the slaveholders to alleviate their feelings of guilt over holding slaves.³ One way of explaining this rationalization of proslavery ideas in general has been by means of psychohistory, which essentially contends that southern proslavery intellectuals were apologists because they were beset by a guilt complex.⁴ This approach,

² Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 97-98.

³ William B. Hesseltine, "Some New Aspects of the Pro-Slavery Argument," *Journal of Negro History* 21 (January 1936), 1-14; Ralph E. Morrow, "The Proslavery Argument Revisited," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 48 (June 1961), 79-94; and Charles G. Sellers, Jr., "The Travail of Slavery," in Sellers, ed., *The Southerner as American* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 40-71.

⁴ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960); William L. Barney asserts that De Bow and the radical proslavery intellectuals were psychologically beset by being "outsiders" in their society, see his *The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South* (New York: Praeger, 1972); David Donald looks at the proslavery biographies and concludes that the general pattern is that "all were unhappy men who had severe personal problems relating to their place in southern society." See his "The Proslavery Argument Reconsidered," *Journal of Southern History* 37 (February 1971), 12; cf. a critique of this approach by Eugene Genovese, *The World the Slaveholder Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 137-50; Drew Gilpin Faust, "A Southern Stewardship: The Intellectual and the Proslavery Argument," *American Quarterly* 31 (1979), 63-80; and Robert E. May, "Psychobiography and Secession: The Southern Radical as Maladjusted 'Outsiders,'" *Civil War History* 34 (March 1988), 46-69.

however, has been dismissed largely as irrelevant since it lacks proof that the slaveholders really felt that way.

Another way of reading the proslavery argument is by comparing the southern mind with the northern and European mind of the time. John McCardell finds that the proslavery argument gave rise to southern nationalism while James Oakes asserts that it was essentially an argument for racism.⁵

The problem with many studies of the proslavery thinkers is that they tend to focus only on one particular period of their lives and on one or two texts to demonstrate the southerners' arguments. More important problem, perhaps, is that historians prefer to treat the ideas underlying slavery as separate from the social philosophy of the south, by which I mean an understanding of society, human nature and the state.⁶ This treatment has prevented historians from seeing the logic of the arguments of the proslavery ideology and its development over time. Unable to reconcile the paradox between proslavery ideas and the dominant liberal political and economic ideas of the time, some historians have concluded that there was inconsistency and irrationality in the proslavery ideas.⁷

It is clear that the mind of the South was contradictory and, like every ruling ideology, self-serving. But its contradictions were not merely a function of the marginalization of individual intellectuals in their society. The main problem lay in the paradox of the Old South; a slave society enmeshed in a world market, at the center of which lay a system of free labor, that is, human beings were free to work for themselves and to accumulate wealth but, at the same time, they were forced out of their traditional dependence on the lords or patrons and

⁵ John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1830-1860* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), 50; and James Oakes, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 129-34.

⁶ An exception is Drew Faust who pays attention to the proslavery intellectuals' social philosophy, see her "A Southern Stewardship: The Intellectual and the Proslavery Argument," *American Quarterly* 31 (1979), 63-80. Her conclusion is that the proslavery argument was fundamentally a moral movement to reform a degenerate South. The paradox in the proslavery apologists, she writes, shows the anxieties of all intellectuals who seek to be recognized in their society.

⁷ See for example, Mark Hall, "The Proslavery Thought of J.D.B. De Bow: A Practical Man's Guide to Economics," *Southern Studies* 21 (Spring 1982), 97-104; and James L. Huston, "The Panic of 1857, Southern Economic Thought, and the Patriarchal Defense of Slavery," *The Historian* 46:2 (1984), 163-86.

placed under the stern control of marketplace necessity. The position of the South in the development of western capitalism was also crucial to the development of southern thought. The growth and expansion of the South was part of the expansion of the world market, in particular the capitalist system in Europe and North America. It is important, however, to point out at the beginning that industrial capitalism did not triumph decisively in any country until the 1840s, and even much later in many countries. The implication for this emerging capitalism is that the picture of the world remained unclear, and the outcome not yet certain.⁸ In this light, emerging capitalism, including its bourgeois ideology, was another social system competing with the old and existing social systems of the time. And one of them was the slave system of the South, which southerners believed was the best social organization in the modern world. They did not perceive emerging capitalism as the world system, but a deviation from western civilization and Christianity. It was logical therefore that the need to defend slavery drove southern intellectuals from attempts at accommodation with the Atlantic world to "project an alternate world order at once supremely reactionary and necessarily new."⁹

My thesis is that southern intellectuals, in particular the proslavery ideologists in the antebellum period, were consistent in their social ideologies, which demonstrated both coherence and integrity. Despite the fact that individuals might have different ideas on particular political and economic issues, and often fiercely argued with one another, on the whole, they adjusted their ideas to the slaveholders' world view which served as a general ideological guideline. In his defense of slavery as a social system, James D.B. De Bow, like other proslavery intellectuals, thus emphasized two points: that expanded economic opportunity was necessary for the well-being of all sections in the South, and racial inequality was necessary for the safety of all groups, whites as well as blacks, in southern society.¹⁰

⁸ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, Forward to *Capitalism, Slavery, and Republican Values: Antebellum Political Economists, 1819-1848*, by Allen Kaufman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), x.

⁹ Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Slavery, Economic Development, and the Law: The Dilemma of the Southern Political Economists, 1800-1860," *Washington and Lee Law Review* 41 (Winter 1984), 2.

¹⁰ Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*, 123.

I have chosen James D.B. De Bow, the well-known proslavery advocate and editor of the only southern commercial magazine in the antebellum period, as a case study. De Bow was quite a popular journalist both in the South and among commercial and publishing enterprises in New York and Boston. Thus he was more informed on the political and economic issues of both the South and the North than many of his colleagues. Since he tried to establish *De Bow's Review* as a true southern organ for all, not just for particular groups or individuals, he was in a good position to receive and consider different opinions from diverse sections of the South. Early on the magazine had a "liberal" editorial policy and moderate viewpoints on political and economic conflicts between the South and the North, and the future of the union. But by the mid-1850s, De Bow could not keep silent on the intensified sectional conflict especially regarding questions of slavery and the southern states' rights. From then on he actively participated in the proslavery movement which wanted to reopen the African slave trade, and, after the election of Lincoln, spearheaded the secession movement. De Bow later served in the Confederate government as a produce loan agent. He seems to offer an example of a southern intellectual who had been "converted" to the radical proslavery ideology in the final period of sectional conflict.

This essay will show, however, that De Bow was not just another "convert" into the camp of the radical proslavery ideologists, as many studies have asserted. Such studies have claimed that his feeling of being a "social and political outsider" drove him to seek political opportunities in the secession of the South. On the contrary, I have found that De Bow's ideas on slavery were consistent with his long-held belief that slavery, as ordained by God, was an institution suitable for a naturally inferior race, and was an appropriate social system for the "union with whites in an unequal relation." Furthermore, there was no fundamental conflict between his ideas on slavery and the economic development of the South. He instead adjusted and modified classical political economy to suit the conditions of the Old South.¹¹

¹¹ My study of De Bow's economic thought, in a sense, is similar to Melvin M. Leiman's studies on Cardozo's economic thought. The difference is that Leiman, as an economist, concentrates on economic theory while my study focuses on history of economic thought. Leiman proceeds from pure economic theory to Cardozo's social philosophy while I go from De Bow's social philosophy to his economic theory. On the whole, we come to almost the same conclusion that a social commitment to defend the institution of slavery was the underlying influence in the development of southern economic thought. Leiman, however, thinks that Cardozo had to sacrifice "scientific analysis" in favor of slavery arguments.

To demonstrate the consistency and coherence of De Bow's proslavery arguments, I have divided this work into two parts: the first three chapters, examine his early life in Charleston, South Carolina, his education, and his social philosophy. The last three chapters then discuss the principles and ideas of *De Bow's Review*, his general economic ideas, and finally his ideas on the "industrial revolution" in the South and the reopening of the African slave trade.

Chapter 2, on early life, traces De Bow's mercantile family life in Charleston and his apprenticeship in a commercial house after his father went bankrupt. Intellectually, he showed traces of southern romanticism in his thought; he also had an interest in science and religion. The main point is that De Bow, early in his youth, already saw a southern society as one with hierarchical relations whereby a man holding property in man was natural, that is, according to God's laws. In his mind, slaves were not "people" but "servants" whose inferior race rendered them dependent upon the white race for their survival and for their development into a more civilized state.

Chapter 3 emphasizes De Bow's education, first at the Cokesbury school and finally the College of Charleston. It was clear from his educational experiences that a main aspect of De Bow's intellectual development was Scottish philosophy, especially the Scottish Realism of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. Their ideas on Bacon's philosophy and "scientific method" were very popular at the time among intellectuals in both the North and South. An important development in the South from about the mid-1820s was the formation and development of a southern outlook and mentality which was distinct from the North. This intellectual trend was informed by the South's political and economic development as a plantation slave economy. Even though they used the same textbooks as in the North, and spoke largely the same political language and used the same vocabulary, southern intellectuals gradually began to read and interpret the texts differently from the North. By 1830 it was apparent that the North and South had developed dissimilar responses to social and political issues. Not confined only to the political arena, sectional conflicts began to arise in every major religious, economic and social

See Melvin M. Leiman, *Jacob N. Cardozo: Economic Thought in the Antebellum South* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1966), 173-203.

institution. Since religion served as the "moral foundation" of the South's social system, this chapter also shows the influence of religion on the formation of De Bow's mind.

The next chapter (chapter 4) presents De Bow's social philosophy, including concepts of human nature, society, and government. His mind was informed by the ideas of the American Enlightenment, particularly Scottish Realism, and Evangelical Protestantism. The slaveholders' world view served as a general frame of reference for De Bow regarding a proper social order and the political values of society's individual members. Like other American intellectuals of the time, De Bow borrowed a variety of political, economic and social ideas from classical Greek and Roman philosophers as well as from English and Scottish authors of modern times. But he modified the borrowed ideas to construct a new logic so that these arguments could stand on their own to justify the mature slave society of the South.

De Bow's views of man and human nature were pessimistic because he believed man was by nature weak and mediocre and must rely on others for his survival. As God's creatures, men were endowed with dissimilar faculties that led to differences among them. Inequality was the natural position of men in society. Accordingly, he rejected the principles of both natural rights and social contract because of their fundamentally egalitarian premises, which, according to De Bow, were against God's laws.

De Bow put his ideas into practice when he launched *De Bow's Review* in 1846. Chapter 5 discusses the mission of his magazine in the dissemination of his ideas for the development of the southern economy, particularly for the expansion of commerce and manufacturing industry. As an expression of southern values and beliefs, *De Bow's Review* embodied the idea of progress.

The idea of progress has been and still is the most influential and convincing social idea in American history. The popularity of the idea, however, has nothing to do with its intellectual sophistication or philosophical appeal. On the contrary, the idea of progress in America has been simplified and addressed primarily to the economic advancement of individuals as well as of the nation. With its modern and scientific outlooks, the idea of progress has been present in many social and political ideas operating in the country in various times. Indeed, to some historians the idea of progress seems to provide the most satisfactory answer to the conflicting political ideas of the nineteenth century, for example, democracy and expansionism, and freedom and slavery.

The idea of progress has continued to be acceptable because America has always been seen as unusually prosperous, providing unrivalled economic opportunities to its citizens both old and new. Lacking traditional forces or institutions like monarchy, a state church, and aristocracy, which were hostile to liberal ideology, America from the beginning was an ideal place for the creation of a republic. The history of the United States, in essence, has never been a history of the past but always of the future because, as a nation, the United States has successfully maintained the myth of the "American dream." It is amazing that American historians of all political persuasions have little to quarrel about concerning the major issues of American history. There has been no single class or group that monopolized and invented this "mythistory" to justify their past. It has been available to all classes. Instead of inventing tradition, Americans invented a belief, in the words of C. Vann Woodward, in a "legend of success and victory," and in what Reinhold Niebuhr called, "illusions of innocence and virtue."¹² For some time Americans ostensibly did not have a history because "history is something unpleasant that happens to other people." With no "past" (class conflict) to settle and a belief in their ability to compel history to conform to the pattern of their dreams and visions, Americans look forward to the future. And the social idea that best serves this purpose has been the idea of progress. Furthermore, the idea of progress has the distinct characteristic of being able to integrate all other political ideas and religious beliefs without losing its vigor and power. The idea of progress, especially in the United States, exerts a powerful grip on the minds and hearts of people when it is used together with other political and religious doctrines. In a sense, belief in the idea of progress is an act of faith.¹³

In the case of De Bow, he redefined the idea of progress so that it was compatible with the conservative ideas of the South. De Bow believed that given its natural resources and a slave labor system under the guidance of enlightened masters, the South could regain its dominance in national politics and improve its economy based on agriculture, commerce, and

¹² C. Vann Woodward, "The Irony of Southern History," in *The Burden of Southern History* (New York: Mentor Books, 1969), 189; from Reinhold Niebuhr *The Irony of American History*, *ibid.*

¹³ J. H. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1932), 1-7.

manufacturing. With a strong and progressive economy, the South could defend its institutions, especially slavery, from northern attacks. In arguing for economic development, De Bow utilized southern ideology and classical political economy. Chapter 6 discusses De Bow's economic thought and the unique development of political economy in the South. His economic theory originated and developed within the framework of southern political ideologies, which were at odds with the principles of classical political economy. This is clear if we compare his economic ideas with those of the Ricardian school, which were based on the logic of emerging industrial capitalism. De Bow, however, still believed in the economic ideas of merchant capital, that progress and the prosperity of society were based on commodity exchanges rather than on the production process.

In the 1830s, when the South began to advance its own political and social ideologies, southern political economists faced a dilemma of conflicting commitments towards the science of economics and their society. Evidently, as a careful reading of De Bow and his colleagues reveals, they relinquished liberal political economy while advancing a "practical" political economy in accord with the conditions of their region. In essence they adopted a new perspective vis-a-vis the key concepts of classical political economy, a perspective that was capable of explaining the existing master-slave relations and the plantation economy. In the end, this venture could not lead to the development of the viable and rigorous southern political economy De Bow so hoped for.

The last chapter studies De Bow's ideas on the "industrial revolution" of the South and his ideas on slavery, including his arguments for the reopening of the African slave trade. For southern political economists, the security of the institution of slavery depended on a prosperous and strong South, which, in turn, relied on its capability to diversify its economy based on a balance of agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing. For them, the successful defense of slavery presupposed an adequate rate of economic growth. De Bow was aware that the single crop agriculture of the South was inadequate to sustain the rapid growth of the South's economy in the competitive world market. His advocacy of an "industrial revolution" in the South thus came as a logical outcome of his economic theory. But like other southern political economists, De Bow's ideas on the promotion of manufacturing, and the diversification of surplus slave labor, were contradictory and impractical. His vision of industrialization was grounded upon the organic view of society and the idea that men were responsible for each other;

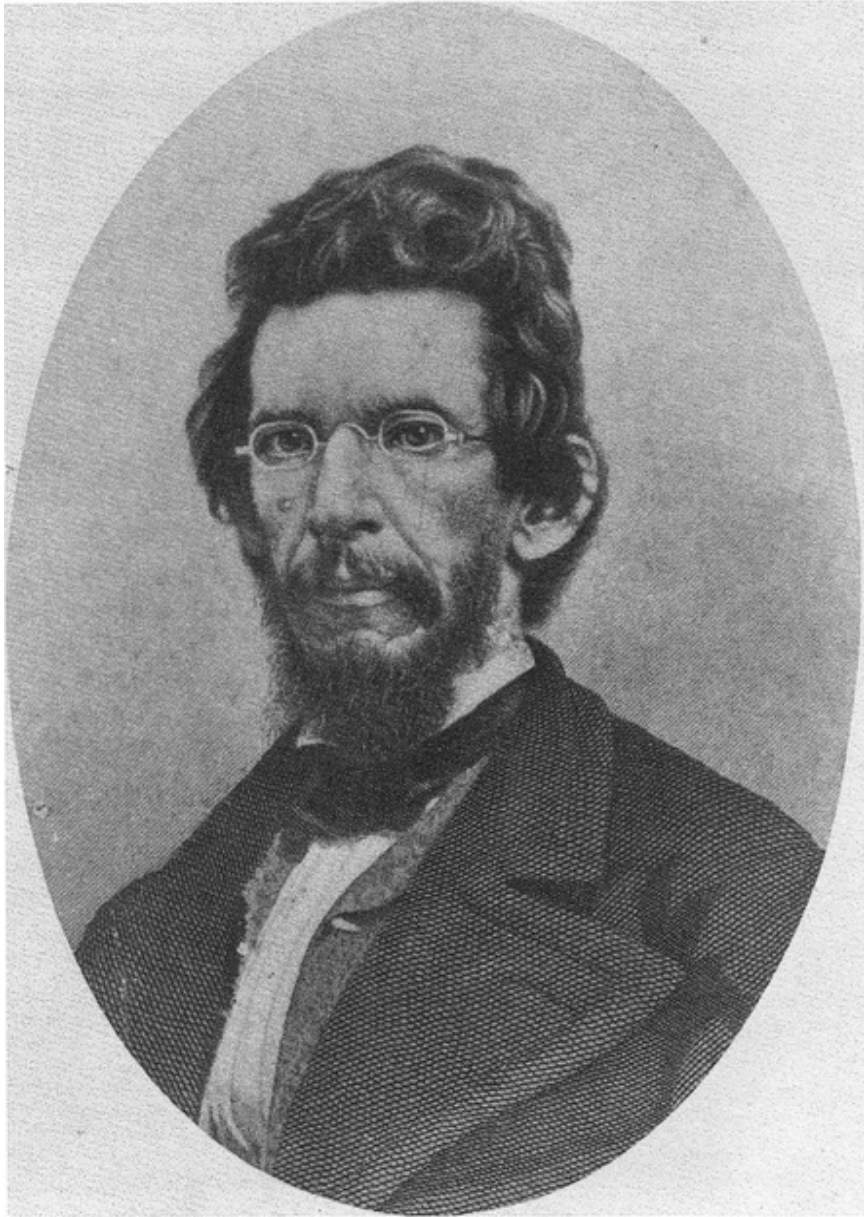
he saw only unity between capital and labor, and thus saw no conflict between wage labor and slave labor in the South. He denied the existence of class conflict within the South. For him, economic development was a precondition for a defense of slavery. The paradox of De Bow's economic ideas thus lay mainly in his commitment to the defense of slavery.¹⁴

De Bow defended slavery as a social system that was ordained by God and justified by history as the most suitable for an inferior race, and for the "union with whites in an unequal relation." Based on his long-held beliefs on slavery, De Bow developed more general and systematic proslavery ideas in the mid-1850s. The latter phase of his proslavery ideas centered around racial arguments based on sociology and anthropology. He and other radical proslavery theorists built the theory of slavery as a universal form of social organization that was competing with the emerging free labor system.

By focusing on the whole development of his mind and taking into account his society's beliefs and moral values, I find De Bow's economic and social ideas were consistent and coherent. De Bow's ideas as well as those of other southern intellectuals thus show that to them slavery was not merely a system of labor exploitation, but much more; it was to serve as the foundation of a society that was trying to build a new social system even as it was rebuilding an old civilization.¹⁵

¹⁴ In many ways De Bow shared many of the economic ideas, as well as the contradictions, of political economy and slavery with Jacob Cardozo, the ablest political economist of the Old South. See Melvin Leiman, *Jacob N. Cardozo: Economic Thought in the Antebellum South* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1966).

¹⁵ Eugene Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 4.



James D.B. De Bow From *De Bow's Review* , 1857.

CHAPTER II

YOUNG DE BOW IN CHARLESTON

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!

Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883)

James Dunwoody Brownson De Bow was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on July 10, 1820. Educated exclusively in South Carolina, first in a public school in Charleston and later in the Cokesbury Institute of the Methodist Church; he finally graduated from the College of Charleston as valedictorian of his class in 1843. De Bow then read law and was admitted to the bar of South Carolina in 1844. Dissatisfied with the practice of law, he found a new career in journalism and remained a journalist throughout his life. At the age of twenty-five, after serving briefly as assistant editor of the *Southern Quarterly Review*, De Bow moved to New Orleans and started his own magazine, *Commercial Review of the South and West*, later to be better known as *De Bow's Review*. In 1849 De Bow was appointed as a Professor of Political Economy at the newly founded University of Louisiana, probably the first chair of that subject in the South.¹ He was one of the founders of the Louisiana State Historical Society in 1847,

¹ There were two major pre-Civil War protectionists who occupied a chair of political economy in the North. One was the Reverend Calvin Colton (1789-1857), a leading Whig journalist of the 1840's, who occupied the chair of political economy at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, from 1852 until his death in 1857; another was Francis Bowen (1811-1890) who occupied the chair of "natural religion, moral philosophy, and civil polity" at Harvard, which eventually included economics, on which Bowen lectured until 1871, when a separate professorship of political economy was established, see Michael Hudson, *Introduction to Public Economy for the United States*, by Calvin Colton [1848] (reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1969), v-viii. John McVickar (1787-1868) of Columbia College held office as Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, Belles-lettres, Political Economy, and the Evidences. It was not clear that McVickar occupied the chair of political economy. But according to McVickar's son, "in 1818 the subject of Political Economy was, at Professor McVickar's request, added to his department in Columbia College. This was its first introduction into any American college as a distinct chair," as quoted in Henry W. Spiegel, *The Rise of American Economic Thought* (New York: Chilton Company, 1960), 65, 130.

which eventually merged into the Academy of Science. In 1849 the legislature of Louisiana established a Bureau of Statistics and De Bow was appointed head of this office. His efficient work in this office together with his keen interest in statistics and commercial development was largely responsible for his appointment in 1853 as Superintendent of the Seventh Census of the United States. An advocate of southern commercial independence and a 'true believer' in the future of the South and its institutions, including slavery, De Bow supported secession and served in the Confederate Government as Produce Loan agent. After the War, he resumed publication of *De Bow's Review* which he kept afloat until 1867.

In 1853 De Bow married Caroline Poe of Mobile, Alabama, who died in 1858. They had two children: Mary Emma, later renamed Caroline Mary by her father, and James Dunwoody Brownson who died before the end of his first year. Caroline "Carrie" Mary died at age of sixteen. In 1860, he was married to Martha E. Johns of Nashville, Tennessee. This marriage produced four children. Upon receiving the news that his only brother was lying at the point of death in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, De Bow hurriedly travelled up north where he developed a serious case of pleurisy. He died in New Jersey, on February 27, 1867, at the age of forty-six. A few days later, his ailing brother died.

De Bow would have agreed with Voltaire that he who serves his country well has no need of ancestors. Thus the family Bible, which De Bow copied down from "the old family Bible of [his] venerable father in his own hand writing," contains only two pages on his maternal parentage and one and a half pages on his paternal. His was short and simple. Besides the important dates of birth and death of each member of the family, the only other significant event mentioned by De Bow is the baptism "on a profession of his (her) faith." The extensive research into, and decoration of, his family background, De Bow thought, was intended to establish authentic and worthy ancestors. As he remarked the project ranked among the "vain traditions in a practical age like ours."²

This claim was "un-southern" to the extent that it ran counter to the common belief and practice of the South's self-identified "aristocracy," especially in the haughty state of South

² The Family Bible, in *De Bow Papers*, Manuscript Department, Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina; hereafter cited as DU. O.C. Skipper, *J.D.B. De Bow: Magazinish of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 1-2.

Carolina, in which social status was immensely affected, if not determined, by family background and kinship ties. But it was reflective of the spirit of political egalitarianism that was prevalent during the Age of Jackson. No less significant was the influence of the belief, which was popular among American intellectuals of De Bow's generation, both North and South, that their age was, in contrast to the recent past, essentially a 'young', 'modern', and 'progressive' one. Such social beliefs, impregnated with ideas of egalitarianism and democracy, generated a greater social concern for matters of the present than of the past. Frederick A. Porcher observed that prevalent notions, buttressed by a republican government, undervalued history. He pointed out that democracy was entirely concerned with the present, paying small regard to the future, and none to the past. "Indifferent to all family ties and relationships of kindred, she takes little interest in tracing the rise of those relationships or the origin[als] of those ties. She is the generous nurse, and patroness of science and of art; but she looks with indifference on the muse of history."³ Economic growth and its impact on individual social mobility in the new nation also shaped the planters' view of their class. They came to recognize the two types of aristocracies; the aristocracy of wealth and family and the aristocracy of talent.⁴

On De Bow's mother's side, the Norton family originated in the early eighteenth century in South Carolina. By the time of William Norton, his grandfather, the family had settled in the Beaufort district on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, where his mother, Mary Bridget Norton, was born on December 15, 1783.⁵

The research of Ottis C. Skipper, De Bow's biographer, has shed some light on the story of De Bow's ancestors. The De Bow family, known in its native France as Du Bois, fled to Amsterdam after the Catholic persecution of the Huguenots, and there the family name was changed to De Boog. Another more colorful genealogical reconstruction had been put forth

³ F.A. Porcher, "Address pronounced at the Inauguration of the South Carolina Historical Society," June 28, 1857, *Collections of the South-Carolina Historical Society*, Vol. 1 (Charleston: S.G. Courtenay & Co., 1857), 2. He was then a professor at the College of Charleston and a recording secretary of the newly created South Carolina Historical Society.

⁴ Thomas Hayward wrote to James L. Petigru, "You belong to one and I to the other." Quoted in Archie V. Huff, Jr., *Langdon Cheves of South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 17.

⁵ The Family Bible, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

earlier by De Bow's colleague, Charles Gayarré of New Orleans. In his eulogy, Gayarré wrote that De Bow was "descended from one of the archers who contributed to the gain of battle of Hastings under William the Norman, and who, for his great feats on that day with his weapon, has become ever since better known under the appellation of 'He of the Bow.'"⁶

In the mid-seventeenth century four children of the De Bow family in Amsterdam immigrated to the New World.⁷ Their descendants then came to New Amsterdam and New Jersey. John De Bow, the grandfather of De Bow, served in the Revolutionary War in a company of the cavalry. His grandparents lived in Canandaigua, New York, until the 1840's.⁸ John's son, Garret, according to Skipper, probably was born in New York City on May 9, 1774.⁹ Garret married Mary Bridget Norton from an old and wealthy family of South Carolina on St. Helena Island in 1802. Thereafter the couple established their business in Charleston, prospered and succeeded in their enterprise for two decades before the business declined in the late 1820's.

De Bow's father was among the first generation of Charleston's merchants who went bankrupt because of the economic changes in South Carolina in the 1820's. Before 1819 and the advent of the steamboat in South Carolina, wagoners and small farmers brought their staples for sale in Charleston. They bartered their cotton for drygoods and groceries with petty retailers on Upper King Street, along the Neck, before driving on to the city to have their tools repaired in the mechanics' shops. From 1819 to 1823, however, internal improvements, particularly in river transportation, revolutionized the economy. Wagoners from the upcountry rarely came to Charleston. They easily traded with merchants in a string of towns that, for the first time, became economically important--notably Hamburg, across the Savannah from Augusta, Georgia; Columbia on the Congaree; Camden on the Wateree; Cheraw on the Pee Dee. Almost deserted,

⁶ Charles Gayarré, *De Bow's Review*, After the War Series, 3 (June 1867), 498.

⁷ O.C. Skipper, "J.D.B. De Bow," Address Delivered Before the Huguenot Society of South Carolina. *Huguenot Society of South Carolina. Transactions* No. 44, (Charleston, 1939), 23-35.

⁸ The Family Bible, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁹ Charles Gayarré_ wrote in his eulogy for De Bow that Garret De Bow was a native of New Jersey, *De Bow's Review*, After the War Series, 3 (June 1867), 498.

Upper King Street ceased to be the retail center of Charleston.¹⁰ What followed the Charleston economic revolution was the concentration of business in fewer hands. While a few retail merchants from King Street could move to East Bay Street, a center of wholesale merchants and financiers who remained prosperous and affluent during this time of economic change, most of the retailers lacked the means to overcome their financial difficulties. Garret De Bow suffered the adverse effects of economic change in the 1820's, and eventually he failed in business. He died on July 13, 1826, leaving a frail enterprise to his wife and five children, of whom James was the second son and the third child. Mary continued to manage the business even though the estate had been reduced to modest proportions. She headed the family for the next ten years in Charleston before another fatal blow struck. During one hot summer, cholera swept through Charleston, taking the lives of Mary and James's older brother on September 10, 1836.¹¹ This misfortune, in turn, inspired James to express his emotions and feelings in writing, an exercise which helped fuel his long lasting and successful career.

In the decades before the Civil War, Charleston was a leading center of political extremism, from Nullification to secession, and the bastion of the lowcountry¹² planters who had dominated the political and economic life of the state since the colonial period. The invention of the cotton gin in 1792 and the growth of the British demand for cotton led to the expansion of cotton culture in South Carolina. The rapid spread of cotton production into the middle and upper districts had created a period of rapid economic expansion and prosperity in South Carolina, which came to an end in 1819 with the drop of cotton prices and an economic depression.¹³ With respect to the differences between the upcountry and lowcountry and the

¹⁰ David Kohn(ed.), *Internal Improvements in South Carolina, 1817-1828* (Washington, D.C., 1938), 233; quoted in William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 39-40.

¹¹ O.C. Skipper, "J.D.B. De Bow," 24.

¹² It was John Drayton, ex-governor of South Carolina in the last decades of the eighteenth century who first used the term, "the lowcountry," to distinguish the region from the "backcountry" and "the middle-country" in his book, *View of South Carolina*, (1802), see Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History* (New York: KTO Press, 1983), 46.

¹³ Alfred G. Smith, Jr., *Economic Readjustment of An Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1958), 7; L. C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the*

yeoman and slaveholder, the plantation slave economy had impressed upon South Carolinians a strong commitment to the defense of slavery as a social system. Such a commitment, as shown clearly by Rachel Klein in her studies of the backcountry in South Carolina, was strengthened by the social and political unification between the planter class in the backcountry and the lowcountry, the seeds of which were already present in the middle of the 1760s.¹⁴

Politically, South Carolina retained the tradition carried over from the early days of British rule, of an extraordinarily powerful legislature. This provided the planters the political means to check the power and the role of the state government, especially that of the governor. More important, it led to the markedly slow development of political parties as a vital force in shaping politics in South Carolina.¹⁵

More significant to the development of De Bow's mind was the intellectual spirit of Charleston, as the cultural and ideological center of the Old South. From 1790 to the 1820s, Charleston developed into a cosmopolitan city rivaling Boston and New York. Charleston scientists and thinkers no longer had to send their researches and articles to be published in Europe; instead they could publish and give lectures in the city. It was reputed that Charleston produced more intellectuals, including scientists, thinkers, and writers, than consumers of their works. David Ramsay, a Charlestonian physician and noted historian, thus saw Charleston as the world in microcosm. The intimate relations between the city and its intellectuals could be seen from the reflection of Basil L. Gildersleeve, a noted classicist who had two chief passions, Charleston and Germany. After years of studying classics in Germany and discovering that Charleston was provincial, he admitted that Charleston did not after all bestride the world. "We

Southern United States to 1860, Vol. II (Washington, D. C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1933; reprint ed., Clifton, N. J.: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973), 673-708; William W. Freehling, *Prelude To Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836*, 15-24.

¹⁴ Rachel N. Klein, "Ordering the Backcountry: The South Carolina Regulation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 38 (October 1981), 661-680; and idem, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History*, 344.

were," he wrote in 1891, "incredibly narrow. Charleston was the center."¹⁶ As a major intellectual center, Charleston, indeed left a deep imprint on the minds of its intellectuals. After the 1820s, Charleston went into a relative decline, especially its economy. Yet Charleston remained an ideological entrepôt. The city imported foreign ideas, redefined and domesticated them, but now with the rise of many new urban centers in the Southwest, the city began to export these ideas westward.¹⁷ The best example was the case of De Bow who moved to New Orleans in order to launch his magazine as an organ for the dissemination of the ideas for the betterment of the South.

Moreover, De Bow belonged to a generation of Charleston's intellectuals who were educated primarily in South Carolina and were a product of its own expanding intellectual life. In De Bow's generation the world of old Charleston was rapidly changing; romanticism and sectionalism were replacing Enlightenment ideals and nationalism. The city had gone through a series of major political and economic crises in the 1820's and the 1830's. The depressions of 1819, 1824 and 1827, and finally 1837 adversely effected the economy of South Carolina. As a result, Charleston stopped growing in many sectors and could not offer new opportunities to its intellectuals. Politically, Charlestonians were alarmed by the 1822 Denmark Vesey slave rebellion. The Missouri and tariff controversies in Congress, the Nullification of 1828-1834, and the Mexican War also heightened their awareness of slavery and sectionalism. Clearly, De Bow's generation, which was born in the nineteenth century, inherited the bitter and divisive political and intellectual legacy of Charleston, in particular the longing for a golden past, the pursuit of the practical, as well as a skeptical view of politics.¹⁸

Such melancholic and somewhat pessimistic attitudes towards life were not uncommon among intellectuals in the Old South. Some historians of the "mind of the South" have attributed them largely to the failure of southern intellectuals to catch up with the social and

¹⁶ Michael O'Brien ed., *All Clever Man Who Made Their Way: Critical Discourse in the Old South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1982), 399.

¹⁷ Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), xii-xiii.

¹⁸ David Moltke-Hansen, "The Expansion of Intellectual life: A Prospectus," in Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, 31-33.

economic changes of the new nation. Instead of thrusting into the new national character of the United States, the Old South, from the 1820s onwards, was creating its own 'cultural autonomy' based largely on the region's particular socio-economic conditions, especially the dominant system of plantation slavery. The commitment to preserve the institution of slavery led southern intellectuals to become more alienated from the modern world. Looking from the vantage point of the North and "national character," William R. Taylor asserts that because of plantation slavery southern intellectuals became alienated from their own archaic society and adopted a pessimistic attitude towards their life and society.¹⁹ Looking at the literary mind of the South, Lewis P. Simpson maintains that the southern intellectuals basically opposed modernity as a "debasing of the humanity of man" and the "loss of the classical-Christian values of the Western world" in the wake of technological and industrial processes.²⁰

Another interpretation disregards the search for 'national character' and, instead, searches for an explanation of the Southern mind in the wider world of contemporary European political and intellectual history. In his penetrating discussion of southern Romanticism, Michael O'Brien points out the main social, political, and theological aspects of melancholy. If the French Revolution had a crucial impact upon intellectuals in Europe, O'Brien contends, the "aging" of the American Revolution, once held as the guiding moral and political conscience of the country, should have created a sense of despair and lost hopes among Americans, especially among southerners, who "felt that Cincinnatus gone, the world was peopled by underlings who could only wrangle."²¹ The fate of republicanism and the bifurcation of this ideology into religious and secular paths intensified their resonant melancholy. In this political context, southern Romanticism was often a criticism of too rapid social change. If the social and political aspects of southern Romanticism drove intellectuals out of their communities, O'Brien contends, southern Evangelicalism brought them back in, restored their faith and promised them a better

¹⁹ William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 37-65.

²⁰ Lewis P. Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 34-64.

²¹ Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), chap. 2.

life in the future. Embracing emotion and reason, southern religion therefore offered the double vision of alienation and community.

Like that of other southern intellectuals, De Bow's mind was romantic.²² In 1841, as a sophomore in Charleston College, he started writing tales that resembled his own life for the *Charleston Courier*. These early tales, which would reappear a decade later in *De Bow's Review*, mimicked Sir Walter Scott's romantic style and were imbued with the air of antiquity. These romantic tales provide a look at the first articulation of his ideas and emotions. A decade later, he still maintained the same ideas, albeit expressed with less sentimentality. The form and content of his tales also tell something about the nature of his beliefs, for a tale, whether based on real or imaginative events, allows its author to express freely his emotions. Almost without limitation, the tale carries no clear historical boundaries of space and time. The romance, as novel or tale, thus perfectly served the emotional and intellectual needs of Southerners who despised "abstract ideas" and materialist views of society and were more in favor of "concrete" ideas and an idealist world view.

In "The Three Philosophers--A Fragment,"²³ De Bow created three characters: Oscar Everet, a stoic philosopher who luckily turned Christian and thus was "saved;" Swinton Walpole, an admirer of literature and friend of virtue and wisdom, who tirelessly pursued knowledge yet reveled in the gay and the splendid aspects of life and love; and, Charles Brougham, also a stoic whose sternness and inflexibility kept him from being led astray by the "exuberance of passion." Fame and fortune came to Swinton when he became a successful orator, statesman, and finally a scholar. Brougham loved to ridicule the "follies of the day." The world knew of his genius but never rewarded him since he remained the cynical philosopher. He never attained the object of his pursuit and in the end was left to die alone from disease in a wretched apartment, strewn with books and scientific apparatus. All three reflected more or less certain contradictions in the mind and character of young De Bow, but Oscar Everet seemed to

²² Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 245-66; see also the recent discussion of Southern Romanticism in Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History*.

²³ "The Three Philosophers--A Fragment," *De Bow's Review* 27 (September 1859), 453-462. The article was first published in the *Charleston Courier*, October 27, 28, 1841. Skipper has suggested that De Bow's early writings are autobiographical. See Skipper, *J.D.B. De Bow: Magazinish of the Old South*, 10.

embody, more than the others, the contradictions of the ideal life that young De Bow probably had envisioned.

Oscar Everet, as De Bow tells us, became a stoic philosopher early in life but was also "an enthusiastic admirer of science and devoted worshipper at the shrine of literature." The most important aspect of his character was his "sensibility" towards the suffering of his fellow man, because of which his heart "filled to overflowing at every tale of woe." This, De Bow said, was a "precious gift from God." From his delicate body and mind grew a resolution that the missions of his life were "love and charity."

In his childhood, Oscar was born into "peculiar circumstances," in which sorrow and misfortune, "the neglect of the world, the loss of parents, the unkindness of pretended friends, as well as the sharpest adversity," had hung over him, like a cloud, from his infancy. Poverty had exiled him from that society which he would have richly adorned; the keenest affliction and neglect from friends had driven him, for solace, to the comforting of ancient philosophy. He reasoned that such an environment had "proselytized" him to the doctrines of a far different school of Zeno which was "indifferent to pleasure and pain, and Antisthenes, whose philosophy was to castigate the vices of the rich and powerful and to be friend with virtue." De Bow seemed to believe that the circumstances of his own life, to a certain degree, had exercised considerable influence in the formation of his character.

The central theme of this allegory was the struggle between Oscar Everet's heart and head. As a stoic philosopher he followed only his head and avoided the sentiments of his heart. When Swinton suggested that Oscar should seek consolation for his miserable life in the love of a woman, he raged over the frailties and weaknesses of woman, which had enslaved the genius of such learned men as Newton, Locke, Bayle, Hobbes, Hume, Gibbon, Boyle, Adam Smith, Pope and Johnson. Oscar then said that these giants thus concurred in the opinion of Pope that, "In fact most women have no character at all."

Yet Oscar could not go on with his stoic life peacefully for the heart had soon "mutinied from the dominion of the head, and *reason and feeling struggled for the master*."²⁴ The principal force that decided this struggle was his mother. Here the tale and De Bow's real life merged.

²⁴ "The Three Philosophers--A Fragment," 460. Original emphasis.

The loss of his mother dealt a serious blow to young De Bow. On many occasions, both in his journal and articles of his early life in Charleston, he recorded his attachment to his mother and his deep sorrow at her loss. He repeatedly mentioned in his journal that in childhood were his "only happy days--then I had a dear and lovely mother."²⁵ In his childhood he idolized his mother and regarded her as the only true friend of his early life. Through Oscar, De Bow lamented over his mother. "In her sorrows he had comforted her, and when care, like a barbed arrow, had entered her heart, he sought to pluck it forth and ply some balm to the festering wound." Upon the death of his mother, Oscar Everet's heart followed her to the grave where a rude slab with one short line was placed at her head, "The heart of Oscar Everet lies here."²⁶

Oscar's relations with his mother seemed to contradict his early philosophy, which had instructed him that woman was incapable of love. "His mother was a woman, and he had execrated woman; his mother was a wife, and he had spurned the matrimonial tie." Oscar Everet found his mother weeping for the memory of his father. Then he discovered "a seal[ed] casket" and opened it to see "a miniature and a bible" inside: "The miniature--his mother as she stood, the young, the beautiful, to be his father's bride, in her happiest, brightest days. He gazed devouringly upon it, and the tumult of his bosom waged fiercer than his nature could sustain. Oscar Everet, the stoic philosopher, *wept long and bitterly*."²⁷

De Bow wrote in the same fragment that Oscar's existence ended with the death of his mother and a new one began. His new philosophy, which he did not mention as coming from any particular school, was a combination of reason and feeling and presumably was able to deal with practical issues in real life. With the victory over his head and a "new heart", Oscar could now happily return, and marry 'Matilda,' a woman who sincerely returned his love. Probably more important in the long run was Oscar's conversion "to the doctrines of a new master--even the pure and eternal doctrines of Jesus Christ."²⁸ In the happy ending of the tale, Oscar carried

²⁵ Journal, July 4, 1836, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

²⁶ "The Three Philosophers-A Fragment," 459.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 460. Original emphasis.

²⁸ "The Three Philosophers-A Fragment," 461.

with him into the church the wisdom of the philosophy he had gathered and became a profound and luminous teacher of divine truth.

From this tale we can see the interplay of De Bow's fantasy life and his "concrete" ideas, which remain difficult to separate. We get the feeling, if not the knowledge, of his misfortune in early life. He rarely talked about his father. In another tale, he lamented over his father and family life, saying that his father had been flung from his high elevation and became a bankrupt merchant.²⁹ It is interesting to note that when De Bow tried to explain any fact or event he always went back to its fictitious primordial condition thereby relegating questions to the level of abstraction.

Characteristic of southern romanticism, De Bow freely expressed his personal emotions and sentiments and mixed them with the more regulated abstract notions of reason and God's law. For example, on July 11, 1838, James De Bow wrote in his journal: "Yesterday was my birthday, although it has not struck me until this morning. Yes I am 18 years." Nothing to be celebrated nor remembered, the birthday ended with a short but sad remark in his diary: "The happy days of childhood have fled." On Christmas day he wrote, "the dullest one I have ever spent. Very melancholy feelings agitated me on calling to my mind the reminiscences of past day's when happiness was a thing to be laughed at. But how alter'd now. A wanderer, an orphan, poor and almost friendless." This kind of melancholy and sensitivity characterized his mind through the end of his life.

Another aspect of De Bow's romantic ideas derived from his early perceptions of his past and how he related it to the present and future. When discussing personal and individual affairs, De Bow tended to be melancholic, but when he shifted to society and its future, he became bright and full of hope. The past (of a society), which he associated with "youth," simply played a subordinate and supporting role to the future. It provided a key to the future, that is, knowledge and understanding of the cause of his misfortune and sufferings which would in turn serve as a guide to correcting the present.

A new generation of southerners, born in the twentieth century, has created a kind of fantasy and complex imagination about the past of the South, which has come to be known in a

²⁹ "The Duel's Effect: A Fragment," by "A Student of C-N College," *Charleston Courier*, January 29, 1841.

romantic way as "the Old South." In fact, the "Old South" was not old at all compared to other countries and cultures across the Atlantic or the Pacific. It did not contain anything "old." The cultural, religious, and political institutions, including the most important one, slavery, were recently borrowed or recreated and modified from those of "old" Europe, which by that time had already started to be "modern."

De Bow and his contemporaries never talked of the "old" America because they believed that the nation had been created at the dawn of modern civilization when reason and science, not superstition, reigned supreme. The United States was a "special society," claimed an anonymous writer in *De Bow's Review*, and its history was unlike the histories of all colonies, ancient and modern. The early history of most nations was covered with "the clouds of superstition or the mists of poetry; but *ours* has been written for *us* by men skilled in observation, and been transmitted to *us* with all the *exactness* and *fullness* which *printing* bestows."³⁰ There was nothing complicated or mysterious about the origin of the South.

For De Bow, the past was the great ocean into which "the gay young life, the world of poetry, and hope" had been swept and submerged. Like the garden of Eden, the past and the memory of it were over and could never be recalled.³¹ When sectional conflict intensified in the 1850's, De Bow, as a spokesman for the cause of the South, rallied behind the banner of "youth" and the future of a new South. As De Bow described it, "youth is the season of flowers, and in its freshness and hopefulness, carries with it a charm and an inspiration. It is a season when images are graven strongest and deepest upon the heart, and when impressions are *indelibly* fixed. I would not break its mystic charm."³² He called upon his associates and friends, "the youth" of the South, whom, he believed, still had the purpose, the resolution and the energy, to "maintain the elements of that society and government which are to be transmitted to another generation." His metaphor of youth was based on the historic actions of the great

³⁰ "A Review of Charles Gayarré's, *Historire de la Louisiana*", by "W", *De Bow's Review* 2 (April 1847), 280. Emphasis added.

³¹ "The Light of Other Days," *De Bow's Review* 6 (September 1848), 236. The article was first published in the *Charleston Courier* in 1845.

³² "Earth and Man," An Address to the Clisophic Society of Charleston College, November, 15, 1850, *De Bow's Review* 10 (March 1851), 298. Original emphasis.

southern leaders and statesmen like Washington, Jefferson, and Jackson. Great men and good men even from the past never grew old; they were always young. Thus De Bow insisted that, "It is the young who mould institutions and create or repress revolutions. Whilst age deliberates, youth acts." But his call for action on the part of youth was aimed at preserving the South and its institutions, not at creating social chaos or revolution. Because what De Bow resolutely defended was deeply rooted in the Old World, the "young" in his mind, indeed, seemed to be "old."

It is interesting to see how this paradoxical use of young and old reversed itself after the Civil War. After the collapse of the Confederate States of America in 1865, De Bow used the word "old" to describe his society and nation. In an unfinished manuscript, "History of the War," prepared in his last days to capture the last tragic episode of the South, he talked of the "old flag" and "old times" of the devastated South. He even called the Civil War the "Old War." Almost instantly, in those five years, everything that used to be "young" and "new" had become "old."³³

De Bow's commitment to the commercial development of the South was shaped by his experience in a mercantile family and from his apprenticeship in an old commercial house of Charleston. This was a period in his youth when he struggled to advance his own life and to find his proper place in society in accord with social norms and expectations as well as his intellectual inclination and personal emotions. That experience taught him much about the reality of the commercial world and also provided him with some means to further his intellectual pursuits.

In the Old South, the planters tended to look down upon the merchants, in particular, their pursuit of money-making. People in general also adopted an aversion to trade in comparison with other professions because of the idea that a merchant produced nothing useful except profit for himself. The prejudice against trade and merchants in South Carolina could be seen from the diary of a young W. Thacher, employed as a bookkeeper on King Street in Charleston in 1818. He wrote, "I should think my own father an accomplished knave if he had at any time made money in the dry goods line in King Street. They are all Jews and worse than

³³ "History of the War," ca. 1866-67, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

Jews--Yankees, for a Yankee can Jew a Jew directly."³⁴ To be sure, there was considerable condescension toward tradesmen and small merchants but much respect for the big merchants especially the English and Scots. The planters thus married their daughters and sons into the families of the great merchants, who themselves often bought plantations.

According to Rosser Taylor, attitudes towards trade and merchants were changing during the 1840s, a claim he makes after stumbling on evidence that Henry Gourdin, a planter son in Charleston "embark[ed] in a business on which the elite of the community looked down."³⁵ But the case of Henry Gourdin was misleading because he came from a Huguenot family of South Carolina. The Huguenots in South Carolina had a long history of economic success, both in plantations and in commerce and industry.³⁶ Consequently, their attitudes towards the switch from plantation to business and vice versa did not represent those of the majority of planters in South Carolina.

Prejudice aside, the slaveholding class welcomed new members who arose from the lower classes and the professions. There were two different routes through which one could gain access into the slaveholding elite: by birth, or by hard work and talent. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, it was widely acknowledged in South Carolina that the upper echelon was not a closed social club but remained open to wealth and talent. Men like James H. Hammond and Langdon Cheves, for example, represented the latter. But with their success they in turn consolidated the "four pillars of the social order in South Carolina," namely ancestors, possessions, occupations and education.³⁷

Deprived of land and Negroes and with only a dim chance of becoming a professional, De Bow hoped to secure his future in education, the last "pillar of social order." For De Bow education was equated neither with wealth and power nor prestige and social status,

³⁴ Thacher Diary, October 1818, quoted in Rosser H. Taylor, *Antebellum South Carolina: A Social and Cultural History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 44.

³⁵ Gourdin Memoir, 103, quoted in Taylor, *Antebellum South Carolina*, 44.

³⁶ Arthur H. Hirsch, *The Huguenots of Colonial South Carolina* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1928), 165-195.

³⁷ R. Taylor, *Antebellum South Carolina*, 40.

all of which, if left alone without the proper guidance of Providence, he thought, would corrupt the soul and sap the virtue of a good and worthy citizen of the republic. De Bow's concept of education, like that of other southerners of his time, essentially meant the improvement and strengthening of powers of the mind or the soul "by exercise and cultivation the most difficult of all things in man's life--the command of oneself." In this sense a "true" and successful education was more of a private and individual responsibility towards oneself than a social responsibility to a public institution like government. This idea was very elitist and no doubt it came directly from the hierarchical society of the Old South.³⁸

The system of public education in the United States was only beginning to take shape in the second decade of the nineteenth century. In colonial America, schools and public support were not unusual. The divergence of northern and southern educational systems began to emerge after the clear line between private and public education in the nation was drawn around the 1820's. The true educational system as we know it today evolved with the development of the capitalist state, which deemed it politically necessary to socialize the youth, to maintain social order, and to promote economic development, according to the ideology of the capitalist class. The failure of the South in effectively developing a system of public education should surprise no one since the education of a "good Southerner" could be perfectly met by the old way, namely private schools. This does not mean that the Old South had no desire at all in organizing a system of public schools. But their definitions and perceptions of "poor" and "public" were quite different from those of the North.

To be 'poor' in the South was degrading for it meant one had no family or relatives to depend on. Socially, even a "po' white" would not want to be publicly called a poor man. At that time the slaveholding class was therefore enthusiastic and earnest in establishing free

³⁸ Conservative Southerners have a keen eye in reading back into the past history of the South. On education, John Gould Fletcher explains what De Bow probably had in mind but was unable to articulate. Fletcher tells us that in the South education and politics are different in their natures and social functions. Education is one thing and right and equality are another. "All that education can do in any case is to teach us to make good use of what we are; if we are nothing to begin with, no amount of education can do us any good." So deficiencies in its public school system were nothing as long as its aim was correct. Once the society aimed at making good men, then quality not quantity must come first. See "Education: Past and Present," in *Twelve Southerners, I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930; reprint ed., Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 93-121.

schools for poor orphans and the children of the "indigent and necessitous."³⁹ Consequently, as happened in South Carolina, the free schools gradually became "poor schools" because of insufficient money and bad supervision from the state, and, more important, there was conflict among leaders of the state regarding the goal and object of public education. J. Perrin Anderson has pointed out that the chief cause of South Carolina's failure to adopt an effective public school system lay in "the attitude and outlook of the leaders of the state." At that time the state was being played upon by two forces, 'democratic' leaders from the upcountry north and the West and 'anti-democratic' planters from the lowcountry.⁴⁰

De Bow went to public school in Charleston sometime in the late 1820's and early 1830's. Years later when he had gained some reputation in national affairs as an editor and statistician, he reminisced about his early school in Charleston: "Our early recollections of Charleston and its public schools and of our great indebtedness to them, are very vivid, and the acknowledgement for this indebtedness is made gratefully here."⁴¹ Financial restraint did not permit him to attend a more prestigious and reputed private academy, which was designed chiefly for the children of planters and the well-to-do whose goals were to be able to continue their higher education either in Northern colleges or in Europe.

Soon after his public school, which probably went up to high school, De Bow had to cut short his formal education, and he began to work as a clerk in the wholesale grocery of E.& J.B. Delano on East Bay Street, where he remained till the end of 1837. While employed as a clerk, his interest in things intellectual never diminished but increased as did his puzzlement over

³⁹ Clement Eaton and Drew Faust agree that the Old South had no public school system which provided free and adequate education for the poor and the 'sand-hillers' and 'clay-eaters' of the South. By failing to provide for public education and effective common school system, Faust believes, the South did little to encourage or support the life of the mind. See Clement Eaton, *The Freedom-of-thought Struggle in the Old South* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964), 64-88; Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 7-8.

⁴⁰ J. Perrin Anderson, "Public Education in Ante-bellum South Carolina," *The Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association* (Charleston, South Carolina, 1933), 3-11.

⁴¹ *De Bow's Review* 27 (July-December 1858), 367. South Carolina legislated its first state-wide public school in 1811, see Edgar Knight, ed., *A Documentary History of Education in the South Before 1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), 156.

the beliefs about life, religion and social realities. For years he put enormous effort into his studies while working full time at Mr. Delano's store. The work proved to be much harder than he had expected. Exhausted by ten-hour days and six-day weeks, distracted by usually long conversations while strolling along the streets with friends after work, and, at times, attracted by the "handsome and beautiful ladies" in the dance hall and around his neighborhood, De Bow left his privately designed courses in disarray and suspended his journal for some time. But the "vain and useless life" did not completely dominate and diminish his will and aspirations. Every two or three months he would severely admonish himself and promise to follow the morally correct route in the employment of "body and mind." After an interval of nearly four months, he again "beseech[ed] the interference of the Gods to prevent a repetition of this censurable conduct." He declared "idleness" and "laziness," which influenced him to the negligence of his duty and principles, as the greatest of evils and his "deadly enemies."⁴²

For seven years De Bow woke up in the morning around six thirty or seven o'clock and, without breakfast, went to open Mr. Delano's store. The routine tasks were "writing up a large bill and letters to go in the country," going out to collect bills around the city, checking the incoming and outgoing goods and helping with the sales in the store. Some days he "had been employed pretty steadily nearly all day." The busy season came in late spring, when farmers flocked to the city to sell their produce and buy farm accessories and equipments or exchange their commodities for dry goods. Then came the relatively slack season when business lagged. From his journal in 1837 it seemed that the store suffered somewhat from a rather dull business even in the usually busy days of spring. Quite often De Bow could occupy himself with the reading of newspapers, history, and romantic novels like Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, which he thought was "the best work--found it a capital work and well worth reading."⁴³ At times he also found himself indulging in playing checkers in the afternoon or engaging in conversations with fellow clerks in the store. He shut up the store at seven or seven thirty in the evening, and "walked round the Battery and up Meeting Street to the Citadel which refreshed me a great deal after the fatiguing exertions of the day."

⁴² Journal, December 9, 1837, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, April 1836.

De Bow also learned about commerce from discussions with local businessmen and from reading newspapers. The insurance office was a place to listen to and participate in the discussion of business matters. The office of the *Courier* was a place for reading the news and articles and conversing with acquaintances. De Bow developed a strong habit of reading newspapers, and, wherever he went, would always look for them. He read mostly Charleston and New York newspapers. This interest and his inclination for writing led him to contribute a few articles to the *Courier* even before he entered college. For example in July 1837, he wrote a few remarks on city improvement after pondering "on the subject of unfilled wells remaining open in our neighborhood to the danger of our citizens and their property." He expected it to be published in the *Courier*.

De Bow's social life in this period revolved around personal relations with relatives and friends. One place that De Bow had opportunities to meet and develop warm friendships with other Charlestonians was at the home of a Mrs. Lebby, a neighbor. He regularly visited the family in the evening, told them some good stories and joined with their friends in playing "a very interesting game with numbers" and chess. He soon noticed that he had "sat next to a very handsome young lady with whom I became quite familiar."

Some nights De Bow could not sleep because of the "noise and rioting of some abandoned profligates and prostitutes" near his house. He complained that these people cursed and swore all night as if they were determined to rouse the whole neighborhood and prevent those who had not yet slept from doing so.⁴⁴

De Bow could not kill time without feeling remorseful. Early in his youth he began to question his conduct and thought, and tried to correct them. Apparently he was deeply shaken by the discovery that he himself had transgressed the supposedly good behavior of his society. One day in August, after work at the store he went home "in very low spirits, and mind much troubled for which I can give no account to." He thought it was "the want of employment for the body and mind. What else can it be." As a result he found that the slightest inconvenience or less tended to make him melancholic. He recollected that for the last two or three weeks back he had not had even "one happy day." He thought the change of season might heal his troubled

⁴⁴ Journal, July 27, 1837, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

mind. "In the winter, it's not so. I have a plenty of employment and have no room in my mind for melancholy reflections. I long for the winter."⁴⁵

The internal struggle between his desires and the socially regulated consciousness weighed heavily on the seventeen year-old, especially since its outcome would determine his future actions and thought. His goal--to be fully accepted as a member of society--demanded that he reconcile his inner-self with the dominant social, religious, and political beliefs of his society.

The struggle lingered till the next summer. On July 26, 1837 he wrote:

Rose this morning. I am ashamed to say much the same time as usual—say seven o'clock. It is with shame that I must admit that I am seldom up earlier. Consequently lose the sight of one of the grandest things in nature. The king of day he is allowed to ascend high in the horizon and peep through the blinds of my chamber upon my inanimate and insensible body wrapped up in the chain of Morpheus, the God of sleep....⁴⁶

Thinking about the uselessness of remaining idle, he then drew up resolutions regarding his future conduct. First, he would keep less company; second, before retiring to bed at night, he would read some history and write; third, he would study the dictionary and grammar each day. He also thought of writing a novel or romantic tale but postponed it for further consideration. Immediately he commenced the continuation of "a journal of proceedings or written conscience to contain everyday thoughts and resolutions to be scribbled off at night and written up every Sunday in a neat book kept for the purpose."⁴⁷

De Bow's selections of books for self-study are interesting for they reflect, to a certain degree, the thinking of intellectuals of the antebellum South. He chose history and other

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, August 18, 1836.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1837. Morpheus in Greek mythology is the shaper or molder of dreams. In Roman mythology he is considered a son of Somnus, the Roman god of sleep. Morpheus is depicted as an old man with wings pouring somniferous vapor out of a horn.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, July 27, 1837.

books from well-known writers and from "distinguished moral authors." Among them were Rollins' *Ancient History*, William Cobbett's *Grammar of the English Language* (1818), Pasken's *Exercises of Grammar and Composition*, Zimmerman's *Solitude*, *The Biography of Benjamin Franklin* and *The Life of Patrick Henry* by William Wirt. Other titles that appeared in his journal were *The Antiquary*, *Rienzi*, *Tom Jones*, *Fashionable Life in London*, *Maid of Moscow*, *Horseshoe Robinson*, *Port Admiral*, *Last Days of Pompei[sic]*, and William Gilmore Simms's *The Yemassee*.

Based on the number of entries in his diary one might conclude that the book that most influenced his thought was Zimmerman's *Solitude*. One night he could not get any sleep for some time, his thoughts, being so fully engrossed with ideas of the "advantage of solitude." He made up his mind that night "to leave the city as soon as possible and buy a small piece of land near Greenville county, build a small house and live there for two or three years." His two friends, John Duke and [Tom] Lynch, who had discussed this idea with him for some time, also agreed to go. As he put it, "the object will be to have a good opportunity for study. I am tired of the city life." His criticisms of the city--a symbol of rapid social change in the nineteenth century--illustrate a perspective of Southern romanticism, a yearning for an independent life, which one could not fulfill in the complex social relations of the city. Thus De Bow concluded, "my ideas have always been on leading an independent life and I see no other way that I can do it than by living as a country farmer."⁴⁸

De Bow failed to realize his plan at that time because he still worked at Mr. Delano's store and had insufficient money to support an independent life in the country. Furthermore, he was not sure of his own ideas and wanted to discuss the whole plan for his future with his aunts and uncles. For the time being, he expanded his reading list to cover more of Scott's work, *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* and *Lady of the Lake*; *the French Revolution*, *Charles XII*, *Shakespeare*, *Burke*, *Plutarch*, Judsons' *Memoirs* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*. Of American authors he read the *Lives of the Signers of American Independence*, *History of the Late War* (1812). Calhoun's speeches and a work in defense of slavery also appeared in his journal.

Another philosophical book that caught his interest was Thomas Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State*. He observed in his journal that the book "must settle the question in the mind

⁴⁸ Journal, August 4, 1837, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

of any reasonable being." He found the book very valuable and highly interesting. The author "carri[ed] conviction of his doctrine to the very hearts of the reader before they [were] aware of it." His proof of the certainty of a future state was first "that every nation that ever exist[ed] whether civilized or barbarous believed in a Superior being, whom if they offended would doom them to everlasting punishment and if they prayed and worshipped him, he would take them to live with him in a beautiful country." Second, astronomers "have calculated that within the range of the telescope 2,400,000,000 of worlds are to be seen each as large and some a million of time larger than our planet." The book thus clearly demonstrated that "the Creator could have had other objects in view in creating man, than for him to die and be annihilated." De Bow finally remarked that these proofs were not from the Bible but from "common sense."⁴⁹

The struggle between his personal desires and the reality of life, which promised frustrations for and limitations on the mind of a thoughtful young man, finally came to an end in December 1837. On December 17, 1837, after closing the store, De Bow went home and wrote a letter to Mr. Delano accompanied by his key to the store. Independence and a solitary life aimed at improving the mind were his justifications for leaving the job. One day before he made his final decision, he had written to his uncle Robert of St. Helena Island about his plan to stay in Greenville as a farmer. His reasons were based mainly on his personal emotions and desire to taste and learn about the world. With no definite plans for the future, he decided to make a journey to visit his aunts and uncles in St. Helena Island and Savannah. The journey, the first in his life, took him to the lowcountry outside Charleston, where he had an opportunity to socialize with planters and to see the prosperous community thriving on slavery. Not until the next year did he have an opportunity to see another side of rural life--that of the small farmer and nonslaveholder in upcountry Greenville. On that occasion, he reacted with disgust at the unrefined manners and ignorance of the farmers there. The two journeys seemed to confirm in him his view of the natural superiority of the planter class and of the hierarchical society based on slavery.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, May 1838. Dr. Thomas Dick, a Scotsman celebrated for his "reconciliation" of science and religion, became a "household word" in the United States of the 1830s after the publication of his works, including the famous *On the Improvement of Society by the Diffusion of Knowledge* (1833), in "The Christian Library," Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1943), 355.

On January 9, 1837, with weather that was cloudy and rainy, De Bow mounted his horse and started a tiring journey into the plantation districts of the Sea Islands. He spent about two months with his aunt, Mrs. William Wallace of St. Helena Island, and another month with his uncle, Josiah Norton, in Robertsville. He hurriedly returned in early May after learning of the devastating fire in Charleston including his house. Despite hardship and many inconveniences, De Bow enjoyed and was satisfied with his trips, which provided him much information on plantation life.

At Ashepoo, a small town with half a dozen houses and a store, he had an extensive view of the Carolina rice plantations. In fact he was "filled with admiration at the beauty and taste in which the numerous fields are laid out. They present a level appearance and for miles on all sides you are surrounded. The fields are all out into squares of about ten feet each by narrow streams of water about two feet deep and about the same in breadth. These are all formed together at one point and empty themselves into a considerable reservoir of water, which by means of a flood gate, are let in and out at pleasure, on the same system as the plantations in Egypt fronting in the river Nile."⁵⁰

At St. Helena Island, he visited many plantations, spending days with his hosts in horse-riding, gun-shooting, and considerable convivialities. He observed that a Mr. William Perry was "polite & sociable and a clever fellow." He looked around at Perry's Negro houses, corn, cotton and gin houses. "His place is pleasantly situated--on the island surrounded on four sides by water and pine forest on the other. And the place savors a good deal of the romantic; everything appeared in a flourishing condition. The only misfortune is that the poor fellow drunk too hard and bears the name of a dissipate drunk man."

St. Helena Island lies about six miles from Beaufort and measures twenty two miles in length and about three in breadth. It has one front on the sea and one on the Broad River. De Bow was informed that there were seventy plantations and upwards of 170 white and twenty-five hundred black inhabitants who produced a crop, in good seasons, of about two thousand bales of prime Sea Island cotton. The planters were "very hospitable but retain many of the aristocratic principles of their ancestors. But little society [was] kept and comparatively few

⁵⁰ Journal, January 10, 1838, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

visits paid. This island was settled some two hundred years ago by my great grandfather and some others from England."

The heartening scene that aroused his sympathetic feeling was, not a gang of Negroes in the cotton field, but the plight of poor white farmers. When he got to know a Mrs. Fendin, he lamented, "my heart bleeds for her. They live a hard life." The family had two sons and three daughters, all grown up. They suffered because they were "compelled to labor hard for their scanty maintenance" without any helping hands from servants. "Would that I could alleviate their hard fate. This is impossible and all I am allowed is to sympathize, when sympathy is but a poor consolation." His disgust at the scene was aggravated when he learned that Mrs. Fendin was related to some of the richest inhabitants of the island. They were sisters. "Oh man how selfish a creature art thou. How much could not this rich lady do for the poor one." Disgusted with his fellow mortals, De Bow exclaimed with the poor:

"Man's inhumanity to man
Make countless thousand mourn."⁵¹

In contrast, Negroes as people remained invisible to his eye and incomprehensible to his mind. One day at the Baptist church he witnessed the baptism of about twenty Negroes. He saw clearly "about two hundred yard from the church, stands a large pond, the minister...walked with his white gown fluttering with the breeze and hoary hair, into the middle and baptised about twenty Negroes. It really was an imposing spectacle to see the old grey headed minister standing out in the water which must have been very cold."⁵² When he looked at the plantations he never saw a single living Negro slave sweating in the field. He always saw a hundred "hands," twenty "Negroes," or a group of "blacks," all in the abstract. Not once did De Bow mention the presence of "slaves" in his journal, writing as if they did not exist in his society. In 1830, more than 15,000 slaves and 2,000 free Negroes resided in Charleston, including those from the districts surrounding Charleston, and blacks outnumbered whites by three to one. Yet time and again he referred to "Negroes" and "servants," but he never used the term "slave" or "slavery."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, March 1838.

⁵² *Ibid.*, January 28, 1838.

For him, as well as other southerners, black slaves were not "other *people*," but simply one's *servant*. Thus the rice and cotton fields with working slaves could offer him a romantic and picturesque vision of a productive land and society while the scene of a poor white family, toiling on the farm without a single "servant," touched his heart.

During his stay with his aunt and uncle Wallace, he received considerable admonition and advice from them especially concerning his future career. They believed that his ideas and ambitions were "one of the pernicious effects of theatre." In their opinion, he "had seven chances out of ten, of becoming completely ruined" and that his "prospects were completely blighted by leaving the Delano's." Furthermore, he had a quarrel with his uncle for getting up late in the morning. Finally his uncle advised him to return to Charleston and again "to enter the old situation even at any compensations and stake to it with all my might." Calmly De Bow told them he would decide the matter shortly.

Despite his shyness and serious mind, De Bow also developed strong affections and sentimental attachments towards the young ladies. He always felt he was an unlucky and hopeless fellow in love affairs. But he also felt ashamed to indulge in such a profane matter as that of personal desire. For him sexual love did not seem natural in the design of God. Thus it always brought confusion in his mind. At St. Helena he fell in love with Sarah, the young ward of the Wallace family. One Saturday evening he walked with Sarah and his sister, Arabella, to visit Mrs. Fendin. "The walk was pleasant. We hugged and sang the whole way, going, returning. Happy. Happy afternoon. But I trifle. I will betray myself. Oh God, & darn. I confess it. It's I am desperately in love. Enough. I say no more."

When the day to bid farewell came, De Bow felt the torment of leaving the place and people who gave him such warm affection, a happiness which he had missed so much in the past couple years or so, especially after the death of his dear mother. On Sunday he did not go to church but engaged in writing a long "sixteen closely written foolscap pages" letter to John Duke. In the evening his uncle read an excellent sermon and some chapters from the Bible. "But they did not cause my troubled spirit to be relieved. Oh God. The Lord that tomorrow I leave nearly all that are dear to me. [It] makes me feel unhappy." For Arabella and Sarah, he had written some poetry enclosed with a lock of his hair. He had received from them the same in return. "Oh! How happy it makes me feel to think that I shall always have these little relics to

gaze upon--to kiss--to plant nearest my heart. Enough, I am getting gloomy. Dark in my mind."⁵³

Returning to Charleston he then decided to make another journey to Greenville in the northern part of South Carolina. With no definite plans and limited money, he took a train to Aiken and from there waited for a coach to go to Greenville. Unable to get on a crowded stage coach and left with little money to spend for the night, he took another wagon destined for Augusta, and found himself in Abbeville. Here he met an old acquaintance, who introduced him to a brother of John C. Calhoun. Then he met Mr. Garrison, who offered him a place to stay and recommended him to teach at a school there. Reflecting on his journey, De Bow could not help but think that it was "fate" which brought him a fortunate situation. "There are but few men," he said, "who could for a moment doubt the existence of a superior being who, through the medium of what we call fortune, points out to us the course to pursue which has long been registered above." He believed men were all "only the blind instruments of 'fate'." He concluded that the things that happened to him could not come as a result of "profane judgment."⁵⁴

De Bow was impressed with the simple life of country folks whom he thought were full with humor and lively conversations on very simple subjects. Theirs was a pure society, uncontaminated by luxury and indigence. He said, "they imbibe a glorious spirit from the life they lead, the air they breathe, [and] the land they inhabit." He was somewhat amused at the simplicity of an old lady in her belief and attitudes. He told her that some parts of the world differed twelve hours in time from this. She asked how long it would take to get there. He answered a voyage backward and forward would consume at least three years. He knew that he was wrong but did not correct himself. The old lady believed because she had "read in the Bible that in the days of Solomon it took three years to do the same." Even though he knew of no such passage in the Bible, he observed that "great improvements had since been made." But the old lady did not know of these changes for she had read and believed that "nothing would be that had not been." De Bow thought this was a strange idea.⁵⁵

⁵³ Journal, March 12, 1838, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, August 8, 1838.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, August 9, 1838.

De Bow also was much amused by the language of the upcountry people, and he had some "animadversions upon their prejudice, habits & C." He thought the people there "willfully perverted or distorted" the words. For example, prepare, air, mare, hair, despair, dear, and bear, were pronounced as prepar, ar, har, etc. The word "fellow" was "applied indiscriminately to gentlemen as well as Blaguards[sic]." To hear someone called, "a fellow from Charleston," was quite a surprise to him. Social distinctions and refined culture pertinent to the lowcountry planter class seemed remote and unheard of in the upcountry. The terms "gentleman & lady" were almost totally absent from their vocabulary. "Never used!" exclaimed De Bow.

Education for them was simple, De Bow thought. A good education was that which enabled a boy or girl to read a chapter in the testament, to write their names and cipher through multiplication with arithmetic. English grammar was something teachers or scholars there never studied because they considered it a pack of contemptible nonsense. De Bow vented his bitterness as an underpaid teacher in Greenville. He loved to ridicule the shallowness of intellectual life in the upcountry. A popular and well-respected minister, according to his judgment, was no more than "an ignorant pedantic fool that can talk an hour about nothing, possessing perhaps no more religion than a goose."

He nevertheless had a great sympathy for the upcountry women. They were not treated as 'ladies' but in general 'women.' Worse, many of them were married only to be a "slave" of their country husbands who did not want a "companion." Country women, handsome and accomplished ones, thus "weighed 160 pounds, could knit stockings [as well as] spin, weave and sew, and perhaps plough and wash &C if required."⁵⁶

The first Monday in every month was "sale day" at which time the country folks, almost a thousand persons from all parts of the district, flocked in to a market to dispose of their produce, such as whiskey, bacon, beef, and cattle, as well as "property such as land, Negroes &c." The upcountry appeared to him as "picturestic[sic] and Romantic" with corn and wheat fields, and numerous fine shady groves and water mills. Indeed the most beautiful scenery of all was the hills, rising to great heights on every side covered with rocks. He recalled later that these were the days of "happy youth" after he had just "escaped from the 'pent-up utica' and thralldom of city life, and from the dull routine of merchants warehouses, when almost from

⁵⁶ "Remarks Upon the Language of the Up-country People," in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

childhood great rows of sugar tierces and huge coffee piles were our familiars." "It was *freedom*," he wrote, "to breathe these mountain airs, and to dream high dreams, for, at the boy age of seventeen, what glorious images are painted all over the sky and beckon us on....Here dawns upon us the idea, that it is not given to man to live by sugar tierces and coffee piles alone."⁵⁷

The ingenious twist of "fate" therefore landed De Bow in Golden Grove as a "country pedagogue, with thick brogans, felt hat, and Pendleton jeans." Tramping through red and sticky loam, for three miles, each morning to "Old Field school house," he taught 12 boys and girls with enthusiasm. Soon he discovered that "school teaching [was] not any fun," and he had a bad headache and was ill tempered nearly the whole time. At one point, he "found it necessary to slap one of Mr. Evans' children upon which all four took the liberty of walking home." After school, he met Mr. Evans together with his children on the road waiting "in a great flurry about it." De Bow remained cool until Mr. Evans' son threatened to strike him. He then gave Mr. Evans a verbal challenge to meet him in the morning "with any weapon he chose." By the next afternoon, however, the conflict was harmoniously resolved. He kept school for almost six months and broke it up by the end of the year. Looking back at those years, he admitted that his teaching was "poor" and the payment was "poor," too. This fortunate adventure nevertheless provided him with a modest sum of money, enough to pursue his dream of higher education at the neighboring Cokesbury.

In upcountry Greenville he also had a chance to write a letter to the Greenville *Mountaineer*, in response to its editorial, under the name of "Aristides."⁵⁸ The content of the letter is unknown but probably it was concerned with political and social issues of South Carolina. Benjamin F. Perry, editor of the *Mountaineer* at the time, was a Unionist strongly and publicly opposed to John C. Calhoun's policies. Situated in the Blue Ridge, Greenville was a stronghold of the Unionist party. The first and last time that Greenville failed to vote for the

⁵⁷ *De Bow's Review* 29 (September 1860), 384-5.

⁵⁸ "Aristides" (c.530-468 B.C.) called *The Just*, Athenian statesman and one of the Greek leaders fighting against the invasion of the Persian troops. His reputation led to his banishment from Athens for three years. By choosing this name, which had been used before by Langdon Cheves, De Bow wanted to express his feeling at the time of a "good" man being left alone in an "undeserved" place.

Unionists was in the secession convention of 1860. In 1837, De Bow had already become a strong supporter and admirer of Calhoun, who also lived in the upcountry.

Greenville was always cherished in his memory as the site of the first meeting with the "proud son of Carolina," John C. Calhoun, the singular statesman, who impressed and exerted a deep and lasting political influence upon De Bow. He saw Calhoun when he came to address the issue of Independent Treasury at Sandy Springs on August 18, 1838. The crowd of about 2000 people was busy preparing the barbecue dinner for the "Honorable John C. Calhoun." At twelve Mr. Calhoun was introduced to the assembled company. De Bow wrote in his journal:

He ascended the stand, the silence was awful all eyes were fixed upon him. The crowd pressed nearer. Majestically the proud "Son of Carolina" stood, and stern but calmly spoke "I come" said (in a tone peculiar to himself) he, "to address by your polite invitation this assembly on a subject now distracting to your country." All eyes were fixed upon the speaker as he proceeded in one of the most brilliant speeches I have ever read or heard, for nearly two hours. So universal was the silence and attention. That a pin might have been heard to drop. The rays of a "Summer sun" were not felt for the presence a brighter "sun" counteracted their influence. He explained all the principles of the "sub-treasury bill" and was greeted with loud huzzah'd when he had ceased. Mr. Calhoun certainly is a great man and very fine looking; is very tall upright graceful and slim; face rather long but strictly handsome; small mouth, grey eye--uncommonly dull when seated; but "flashes fire" in argument; hair straight and grey stands upwards, face wrinkled. His dress a suit of black that I judge him to be a man at least of 60 winters. As he rises his eyes are rolled slowly round on the audience, his style is pleasant and laconic, very simple. No ostentatious display of words. [He] has a peculiar way of ending his sentences, as for instance "I'll prove it to the gentlemen" "I'll prove it", "I'll prove it", "Prove it." It sounds truly musical. Again he says, "Is that right", "is it right", "right" It has been said that Mr. C[alhoun] is greater in argument than in eloquence.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Journal, October 1, 2, 1838, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

After Calhoun had finished, Waddy Thompson, a strong opponent of Calhoun's and a "Bankman,"⁶⁰ rose to refute what the Senator had said. The debate took off in which De Bow thought the unfortunate Waddy, who had the "hardihood to splinter a lance with Calhoun," was dealt with "forked lightnings" and over-powered by the enemy's battery. "I should not wonder," De Bow told himself, "if he was a converted man after this."⁶¹

That night Calhoun with his son and half a dozen companions arrived at the farmhouse where De Bow resided. After supper he had a few words with "old man Calhoun," who was very "sociable and polite," and heard him converse with some gentlemen. After this meeting, De Bow, upon the advice of a Baptist minister, sent an application for West Point to John C. Calhoun. He soon got a letter from Calhoun stating that he was unable to secure De Bow a place in West Point.⁶² The next warm memorable moment of friendship came in 1845 when De Bow accompanied Calhoun on a trip from New Orleans to Memphis, where the Commercial Convention was to be held and the idea of launching a magazine for the promotion of southern commerce was conceived. From then on, the two developed more intimate relations until the last days of Calhoun. De Bow's respect for the statesman can be seen from his travel notes made during a trip to Calhoun's hometown: "Mr. Calhoun, I have sworn by you all my life, and, next to the Almighty, you are the greatest man in the world."⁶³

Thus far are the little known life and ideas of the young James D.B. De Bow. His detailed and candid journal not only provides a deep understanding of his life and mind but also sheds light on southern slave society. No journal or diary can tell the whole truth of life or

⁶⁰ Following Jackson's hard-money and anti-bank policies, Van Buren created a new treasury system under which the government would keep its funds in regional treasury offices rather than banks. The treasury branches accepted and paid out only gold and silver coin; they did not accept paper currency or checks drawn on state banks. The bill, passed in 1840, created a constant demand for hard coin. It deprived banks of gold and added to the general deflation. Waddy Thompson, first elected as Congressman in 1828, failed to return to Congress after the Nullification conflict. In 1834 he won an election over Benjamin F. Perry. In 1838, he broke with Calhoun and united with Perry against Calhoun in the upcountry.

⁶¹ As a matter of fact, Thompson was one opponent whom Calhoun never did break in South Carolina.

⁶² Journal, January 3, 1839, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁶³ *De Bow's Review* 29 (September 1860), 388.

society. But like a still-life painting, it does capture particular events and ideas in certain circumstances. To understand the life and society, we must go beyond the 'private' character of the journal and treat it as a 'social' discourse. In this sense his journal, like many of its kind in the antebellum South, is better understood as a representation of "communities of discourse."⁶⁴

From his journal, though, we see an ordinary young man from a middling family, who tried to find his way within the framework of his society. Sometimes he followed what the society had told him to do and to believe; other times he felt confused and desperate. In the main, however, De Bow cherished the values and beliefs of the South and its institutions. He was growing up to be a good southerner.

⁶⁴ See David A. Hollinger, "Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals," in John Higham and Paul K. Conkin eds., *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 42-63.

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATION OF A 'SOUTHRON'

For in much wisdom is much
grief: and he that increaseth
knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Ecclesiastes 1; 18.

De Bow's mind was shaped by his experiences at Cokesbury school and Charleston College, schools he attended from 1839 to 1843. Historians of nineteenth-century America have not paid sufficient attention to the important role and significant influence of colleges upon the mind of the South. For some time many studies of colleges in the Old South have been focused on the history of colleges with emphasis on such issues as which college was the first and the oldest in the region, if not in the nation; who built the college and who taught in it as well as lists of books from the college year book, rather than focusing on critical studies of courses and the assessment of the role of college in the community. What if we were to ask about the kind of courses the college adopted and the reasons for them? In what way did the college relate to the community? What did the student study? How much did he really study? Why were the Classics so important in the South and how much and in what way did they influence the mind of the South? Was college education in the Old South basically different from that of the North? What kind of European ideas did the South borrow and how deep was their influence? Unless we have substantive and critical studies on the formal training of intellectual minds in the South, it is presumptuous to pass judgments and draw conclusions about the quality of the mind of the South and its intellectuals.¹

In the case of De Bow's education, it is easy to say that college education inculcated in him the proslavery and conservative ideas that eventually made him one of the "fire-eaters" of

¹ See for example, J.H. Easterby, *A History of the College of Charleston Founded 1770* (Charleston: Scribner Press, 1935); E. Merton Coulter, *College Life in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1951).

the South. It is difficult, however, to understand and explain the intellectual sources of his conservative ideas and how he developed and internalized them. The problem arises when we compare his education to that which was available in the North during the same period of the early republic. The social atmosphere in which the college came under the influence of church and denominational agencies was similar in both the South and the North. The curriculum that De Bow studied in Charleston College was not different from the one being taught in northern colleges. And most important, both regions shared the same intellectual tradition of Enlightenment thought, which they modified to suit the American environment. Yet by the third decade of the nineteenth century, northern and southern intellectuals seemed to be thinking very differently. Though they continued to use the same vocabulary, they imported different meanings into their discourses. Not only did they disagree on issues, which are normal among intellectuals, but they denied each other's fundamental ideas and interpretations of the nation's social and political problems.

One has only to read William Gilmore Simms's review of Herman Melville's novels to feel the deep cleavages within the American mind of the time. In his review of Melville's *Mardi*, Simms objected to the way Melville had painted "a loathsome picture of Mr. Calhoun, in the character of a slave driver, drawing mixed blood and tears from the victim at every stroke of the whip." Simms could not comprehend what Melville had in mind and was annoyed with the "mysterious" character in Melville's novels, which bored him to death. The last word that Simms could give to Melville was that he was a lunatic and his book mad.²

Simms's harsh judgment owed much to the growth and development of the American mind and its regional divergence. The distinct American--provincial--Enlightenment, which turned upside down the radical and critical mind of European Enlightenment, came of age in the early phase of the creation and unification of the new republic.³ By becoming

² *Southern Quarterly Review* 16 (October 1849), 260-61; *idem*, 21 (January 1852), 262; *idem*, 22 (October 1852), 532. See also Edd Winfield Parks, *Antebellum Southern Literary Critics* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1962).

³ According to Donald Meyer, the American Enlightenment was unique in its provincial character, democratic political outlook, and nationalistic movement. See Donald H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Americanized, the Enlightenment lost the critical spirit which had been its hallmark. By making the Enlightenment into an American institution, the Americans "lost the use of a method of critical self-examination," which might have added more richness and texture to its intellectual life and political inquiry. According to Donald Meyer, the American Enlightenment, which was against deism, infidelity and "licentious speculation," and which was characterized by a distrust of rationalism and a political assault on the intellectual, set a pattern of defensiveness, conscious provincialism, and anti-intellectualism by the 1790's that hardened into a tradition in the course of the nineteenth century. If we accept Meyer's assertion, it means that the defensive and conservative mind of the South was not a distinctive product of the South but a continuation of the American Enlightenment, perhaps, in a much more extreme, reactionary vein than the North. The intellectual differences, according to Meyer, between North and South, therefore, were not of two kinds of societies but rather of degree.

Henry F. May, in contrast, suggests that there was a "Southern Enlightenment" with fiercely religious orthodoxy, political conservatism and defense of slavery as an institution, in contradistinction to the North's flourishing liberal social and political isms. May shows that the Virginian upper class, the staunch deists modeled after the celebrated Jefferson, one after another renounced their infidelity and was finally converted to Evangelicalism by the first quarter of the nineteenth century. But since May is primarily concerned with the history of the Enlightenment in America as a whole, his section on the "Southern Enlightenment" has limited use as it serves mainly as another illustration of the decline of the Enlightenment in America in the early nineteenth century and the triumph of evangelical Protestantism both North and South.

In general, the historiography of the Enlightenment in America terminates around the first quarter of the nineteenth century with the decline of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, when the new nation was fostering the American mind and its national character. It is therefore at this critical period of the formation of the "southern mind" that most studies end. Consequently in many studies the "southern mind" is either ignored or treated as an aberration or a deviation from the mainstream of liberal thought.⁴

⁴See May, *The Enlightenment*; Meyer, *Democratic Enlightenment*; and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1955).

In contrast, the study on the "mind of the South," chiefly by southern historians, takes up what has been left out in the study of the American Enlightenment. The historiography of the "mind of the Old South" quickly fills up the gap and advances the thesis that there was by the middle of the 1820s a distinct conservative southern ideology, including proslavery thought, which was mainly a reaction against the attack from northern abolitionists.⁵

In my judgment, the antebellum South created its own men of letters whose concerns were to formulate a world view that best explained the southern way of life. The mature slave society of the South, with its distinctive culture, religion, economy, and politics, demanded a formulation of a world view, that is, a common understanding and attitude towards life, death, human nature and man's relations to the world. This called for the creation of intellectual elite of the South. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, a class of intellectuals did exist in the South, and began to develop and express a southern view of the world.⁶

Reflecting the paradox of the Old South, the slaveholders' world view embraced visions of both old and new Europe. On the one hand, the world view of the southern planters contained elements of traditional values that prohibited the total reduction of man to thing, of traditional political thought that stressed the responsibility of the higher order to the lower, and of economic thought that sought to distribute finite resources. On the other hand, the slaveholders' world view also contained elements of modern values, political, and economic ideas, which emphasized social progress and economic prosperity based on the primacy of propertied individualism. The southern world view, however, with its commitment to the

⁵ See Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, Vol 2 (New York: A Harvest Book, 1927), 57-130; Clement Eaton, *The Mind of the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967); Drew Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); See a brilliant discussion on the historiography of the mind of the Old South in Michael O'Brien, *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 19-37.

⁶ Lewis P. Simpson, *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983), 37.

institution of slavery, was closer to a traditional world view that subordinated the individual to the community than to a modern world view that subordinated society to the individual.⁷

Influenced by the South's political and economic development based on plantation slavery, southern thought was different from that of the North. Growing up in the same politically unified nation, the South studied the same textbooks as those used in northern colleges, and spoke largely the same political language and used the same vocabulary. But by the second decade of the nineteenth century, as the sectional conflicts evolved, we can discern the growth of different readings and interpretations of the same texts.

By that time it was apparent that the North and South had developed dissimilar responses to social and political issues. Not confined only to the political arena, sectional conflicts began to be felt in every major religious, economic and social institution.⁸ And, from the start, the South took sectionalism more seriously than the North. Ironically, while the United States was creating its unified nation and national identity, its main philosophy--the American Enlightenment--was in the process of breaking up into two schools. In the long run the bifurcation of the American Enlightenment crystallized not only into two opposite viewpoints of North and South but more important into two different world views.⁹ Given such background, I intend to examine the formation of De Bow's mind mainly through his educational experiences.

⁷ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 97-98.

⁸ See Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948).

⁹ Eugene D. Genovese proposed many years ago that the Old South had developed the slaveholder's world view which was fundamentally different from that of the North; see *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretations*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1969). Since then many studies have tried to refute his assertion by claiming that essentially the slaveholder's practices as well as their world view were also capitalist like the North. See for example James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); and Laurence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). Their contention is based, however, mainly upon attitudes of southerners towards wealth and progress. The point is that the slaveholders of the South should be perceived as a social class with discrete material interests, moral sensibility, ideological commitment, and social psychology. The meaning of their economic viewpoints therefore should be seen in the context of the South's social philosophy.

Leaving "Old Field School House" at Golden Grove of Greenville, by the end of 1838, convinced of his own deficiencies in teaching, De Bow went straight to neighboring Cokesbury, this time as a student. He had acquired some information regarding the school some time before he left Charleston for the upcountry. The Cokesbury institution was a new experimental school, resulting from a new educational movement in favor of manual labor which had been popular throughout the country in the 1820s.¹⁰ Conceived in 1834 by the South Carolina Methodist Conference as a practical and useful way to train young people, the Cokesbury Manual Labor School opened in 1836. The Conference chose Mount Oriel Academy as a location for the new school and the name of the school was changed from Mt.Oriel to Cokesbury in honor of the two first Methodist bishops--Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury.¹¹ De Bow spent one year at Cokesbury and graduated at the end of 1839. A few years later, it was found that the manual labor system was impractical. The system was, accordingly, abandoned, but the school itself continued to flourish into the 1860s. The school was known later as Cokesbury Institute.

De Bow arrived at Cokesbury on January 10, 1839. At dusk, with the whole school quiet and almost empty, he found but two students. During the next two days more students arrived. His first week left him very "pleased with institution and boys, also with the Rector Mr. Baird who seemed to be an accomplished gentleman." Young De Bow did not much like Mr. Mathew Williams, the president of the school, because he seemed "to be a very crabbed fellow." Twenty-one years later, in the summer of 1860, De Bow revisited the institute for the first time.

¹⁰ In South Carolina, the first manual labor school was founded on the bequest of Dr. John La Howe, of Abbeville county, who in 1796 left the bulk of his property for the purpose of establishing an agricultural school. In 1839 the South Carolina State Commissions wanted to use this manual labor school as a solution to the problem of the free school system. The plan was tried at Cokesbury by the Methodists, at Erskine by the Associate Reformed Presbyterians, at Furman University by the Baptists, and at Pendleton by "working citizens." Despite its promising principles, the school proved to be a failure. Popular perceptions of formal schooling did not support such an idea of combining intellectual study and manual labor at the same time. Ironically, most students who came to this school were sons of farmers, and they learned to work in the field before going to school. Thus they wanted to study intellectual work rather than spending time cutting wood and holding the plow while at school. See Colyer Meriwether, *History of Higher Education in South Carolina with a Sketch of the Free School System* (Bureau of Education Circular of Information No. 4, Washington, D.C., 1888), 5.

¹¹ *De Bow's Review*, 29 (September 1860), 385, 392.

He recalled those "worthy men who trained us, then, to paths of usefulness and guided our wayward tracks." "Baird, kindly, gentle, abstract, indefatigable in the path of duty; Williams, earnest, methodical, even military in your rules and discipline, yet tender even as woman in your chidings; Hodges, excellent caterer, and considerate, almost paternal field-master, covering up rather than disclosing our short-comings in breaking up the hard earth and in making two blades of grass grow where but one had grown before."¹²

The instruction of the school was divided into two departments; the Laboring Department under Mr. Hodges and the Literary Department under Mr. Williams for philosophy and algebra, and Mr. Baird for Latin grammar. Spiritual life and religious affairs were the responsibility of the Reverend Mr. A. Chrietsburg with the assistance of Mr. Dunwoody, Mr. Wightman and Mr. Leadbetter. The first exercise in the Laboring Department for De Bow was wood-cutting. He found it "to be pretty hard work," which sorely blistered his hands. He confessed years later that the "manual labor experiment" had given him "such a distaste for labor that the very sight of a plough or an ox-cart has been our especial horror ever since." The Literary Department was more genteel but also required hard work and intense memorization from Latin to philosophy to algebraic signs. De Bow often rose two hours before daybreak to recite lessons. "As usual these days," he wrote in his journal, "were spent in studies though I cannot say to any great advantage." The usual format in class was to recite the lessons and to show compositions in order to demonstrate the students' competence in their lessons.¹³

De Bow often visited Mr. Williams' place and spent time conversing with friends, both male and female. Sometimes he went to Mr. Hodges in the afternoon. Soon De Bow began to realize that he had fallen in love with "Miss C." whom he had met and conversed with for some time at Mr. Williams' and Mr. Hodges'. He tried to control his heart and tell himself that, "alas her heart is another's." He confessed that "Miss C[onnor]" had conquered him totally and

¹² *Ibid.*, 390.

¹³ *Journal*, January 15, 1839; February, 18-28, 1839, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.; Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American Undergraduate Course of Study Since 1636*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), 38.

vowed not to see her any more for he knew his love would always be hopeless. Some nights he had debates in his friend's room upon a "very delicate subject viz the beauty of two ladies."¹⁴

Another important influence on the formation of De Bow's mind was religion. Evangelical Protestantism played a pivotal role in the Old South, and Southern conservatives have long insisted that it should be understood as a religious society. Conceived as the "cornerstone of shared beliefs," Christianity served as the "moral foundation" of the South's social system.¹⁵ By 1820 the revival movement had re-Christianized the Old South, and the slaveholding elite began to appeal to religion to explain its political ideas and world view.¹⁶ Religion undeniably exerted an immense role in shaping the mind of the South. The Reverend J.H. Thornwell thus insisted that religion and education were "inseparable allies" since both performed similar social functions, that is, to instill and create the bonds among members of a Christian community.¹⁷

In the Old South, Sunday church was the event for a community. Apart from seeing and getting acquainted with other ladies and gentlemen, De Bow's main object was to hear the sermons. While in Charleston therefore, it was not unusual for him, to go to many different churches in one day. One Sunday he went to hear the Reverend Mr. Sewell at the Methodist Church. He could not get in at all because the church was so crowded. "There were two hundred or more Negroes lying and standing in the churchyard." Then he went from there to the new Methodist Church and heard a "fine sermon." Next Sunday he went to the Orphan House Church which was also crowded and he left after staying outside a short time. Next week he went to the Universalist Church and heard a "very excellent discourse" from the Reverend Andrew. As usual, the church was crowded to the doors, and nearly all the gentlemen had to stand up. Later that day he walked up to St. Paul's Church.

¹⁴ *Journal*, February 24; March 2, 10, 16, 1839.

¹⁵ Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," in Numan V. Bartley, ed., *The Evolution of Southern Culture*. (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 14-27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16. See also Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

¹⁷ "Memoir of Dr. Henry," *Southern Quarterly Review* 19 (April 1856), 200.

He especially remarked on the spectacular sermon the Reverend Fisk preached at the Universalist Church. It was crowded with about six-hundred people gathered in a very small church. No gentlemen got seats, the ladies occupied them all and even a few of them were left standing. He recorded the event as follows:

Excessively heated the church was, as it was a very sultry evening anyhow, the perspiration actually dripped off[f] me in large drops. It did not seem that anyone felt it, so much interest [was] taken by everyone in the sermon. The text was selected and sent him by a Methodist minister thinking that it was a stumbling block, in the Universalist way- "but he was mistaken," the words were-- Unless a man be born again, he never can enter the kingdom of God, which was explained to the satisfaction of all. After the sermon, he allowed fifteen minutes to any person, that would come, and contradict one word he had made use of, & if so he would, publicly renounce his faith forever. But no one seem disposed to do so. So the congregation was dismissed at 1/2 past nine.¹⁸

De Bow seemed attracted to the Reverend Mr. Fisk's sermons and kept coming back to hear him. "I seem to understand him better every time I hear him preach." Yet De Bow cast doubt over the Calvinist doctrines in his remarks that "I never can believe that a just God will, doom nine tenths of his children to an everlasting hell to dwell amongst devils, and fire & brimstone, for a few sins committed, in this world. It would do him no good. It could not make him happy, and if there is a miserable hell, there can be no happy heaven. But enough I am not able to discuss, matters of such importance, as grey hairs are in all denominations."¹⁹

At Cokesbury, De Bow again had interesting and intense religious experiences. He attended church three times on Sunday, and on the other days only in the morning and afternoon. He heard the Rev. Mr. Abel Crietsburg deliver two very "affecting sermons." The text in the morning was from Corinthians; "Oh Death where is thy sting? Oh! Grave where is thy victory." In the afternoon the sermon was from Matthew; "For ye know not in what hour the Son of Man

¹⁸ *Journal*, June 14, 1836, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, June 26, 1836.

may come." These sermons upset De Bow, who soon felt himself a "condemned sinner and outcast." "Oh! What would I not give to be a Christian."²⁰

During a week of camp meeting for religious conversion,²¹ there was an interesting prayer meeting at night. Several students went up to be prayed for. Poor De Bow was struggling in his heart with God's words. He wrote in his journal that he felt ten times more unhappy than during the day and knew not why he did not go along with other students. He feared that "God's anger will become so great that I shall be cut off in an unprepared state." He felt "solemnized" when reflecting upon his past "full of sinful deed."

The next day he resolved to quit the profane life he had led and told himself to lead a better life, that is, "to keep on good terms with all the boys; to study hard; to tell no untruths nor curse or swear." On Sunday he attended church three times and also went to a prayer meeting. He asked God to open his eyes to his deplorable situation and went up to the stage to be prayed for. But still he got little comfort from the prayer. In the evening he went up again but with little better effect. At that moment he felt deeply the hallowing of loneliness in the desert and thus determined "to serve God faithfully and steadily." "Oh! May God in his infinite mercy *preserve me*."²²

The following week he noticed but little change for the better. Sometimes he was not as earnest in prayer as he should have been. When he reflected upon this relaxation he

²⁰ *Ibid.*, March 1839.

²¹ Religious camp meeting was a popular practice to reenact the revival impulse of the past and to initiate young people into the "mysteries of religious conversion and the responsibilities of becoming full members of the Evangelical community." The camp meeting was originated in the Great Kentucky Revival from 1796-1801. Many Evangelicals believed this was the best means to keep alive the emotional intensity and sense of power that had always been their ideal, but which had eluded them during the 1790s. See Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 51-53. The camp and protracted meetings also provided special social opportunities for rural southerners of all classes who did not have access to other diversions, to meet and find their "sisterhood" and "brotherhood" from their common experience in Christ. But the bonds among diverse members of a Christian community never implied social equality. And they were comfortable with the idea of bonds among members of a hierarchical society. See Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Religious Ideals of Southern Slave Society," 22-23; and Dickson Bruce, *And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974).

²² Original emphasis.

determined "to persevere to serve God and pray three times a day in *secret*"²³ until his blessings are showered down."²⁴ De Bow remained in mental torment for weeks, unable to resolve his troubled emotions, which he believed were sinful and obstructing him from receiving the love of God. He resolved to persevere steadily until he could "get religion." He was afraid that his heart might be too corrupted to be saved and his offerings to God were too much confined to "emotion."

He nonetheless went with all the students to a camp about two miles away. He stayed in his "tent" nearly all day doing speeches for the student debating society, reciting lessons for class and writing letters. That Sunday he heard a Mr. Dannaby preach one of the finest and most elegant sermons he had ever heard. "He forced upon me the belief of Christian's happiness and sinner's eternal misery. [I] felt very bad, as I knew that I had not done my duty, according to resolutions I often made."²⁵

The moment of "truth" came in the last day of the camp-meeting. Still feeling the pangs of a guilty conscience, De Bow, along with his fellow students, went up for a long prayer till near mid-night asking for God's pardon and giving glory to His name. In the dark of the night the lightening suddenly struck, for that night De Bow finally felt the moment of the presence of the Holy Spirit and received an assurance of His favor. "Oh! It would be in vain to attempt a description of the delightful sensations then entertained. I felt so happy that I could scarcely know what to do. Oh! Blessed be the Holy name of Jesus forever."²⁶

His fellow students were also moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit and joined him in shouting. He wrote, "truly this has been a powerful interposition of God in our favour, and surely this was a happy evening for the church." A number of mourners sent up their prayers so that they could "struggle hard in praying for their conversion." Yet the meeting did not break up at this point. It went on until "everyone was so wearied that they could hardly utter a word

²³ Original emphasis.

²⁴ *Journal*, March 21, 1839, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, April 7, 1839.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, April 8, 1839.

either song or prayer" after having been engaged steadily in that day's camp-meeting for six hours.

Two days later, De Bow still prayed three times a day in secret for a firmer faith and the stronger assurance of forgiveness and for the power to overcome temptations. He still felt unhappy at times as a doubt would pass through his mind "whether I am really forgiven or not." "Oh! How I dread the thoughts of ever returning to a sinful world, my dear Saviour. Oh! Be with me, preserve me, and make me one of thy faithful and useful followers. Give me more faith, more humility and more grace." He then read five chapters in the Bible and resolved to do so everyday and to pray without intermission.²⁷ Religion therefore was another important factor in shaping De Bow's "mind," by which, it would seem from the examples he gives, he really meant "soul."

Nineteenth-century American college education was not limited only to college curriculum, but included such equally important extracurricular activities as the student literary societies. Originated in the 1760s, the societies embraced the humanist ideal of the man of letters, which, according to Charles Rollin and Hugh Blair, referred to "all the forms of discourse--orations, historical works, philosophical treatises and dialogues, epistles, fiction, pastoral poems, tragedies, and comedies." In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the term "literary" had a far broader meaning than it carries at present. It meant roughly all knowledge, not mere "literature"--fiction, verse, and drama. Thus the American college called itself or was called by others a "literary" institution.²⁸

According to James McLachlan, the early nineteenth century American college students disliked the curriculum because some subjects, like natural philosophy, were "very dry and unentertaining." The lack of books and good libraries also induced students to organize their own societies so that they could develop their own libraries and have easy access to the needed

²⁷ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1839.

²⁸ See James McLachlan, "The 'Choice of Hercules': American Student Societies in the Early 19th Century," in Lawrence Stone ed., *The University in Society: Volume II Europe, Scotland, and the United States from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), 449-494.

books.²⁹ The student societies thus provided a social and intellectual framework that gave meaning and stimulation to the lives of the students. Combined with the formal curriculum, the student literary societies completed an educational process that was "intellectually solid, rigorous, broad in scope," and well tailored to the character and interests of the individual student.

At Cokesbury De Bow joined the Demosthenian society. He had actively participated in debating first as a member and later as president of the society which, among other activities, taught oratory to students by having them practice forensic disputations on various subjects. The aim was less to train them to debate and argue against others than to train them to think correctly.³⁰ In the Old South, the art of oration was a must for gentlemen and professionals who planned to serve in public affairs, at law, or in the ministry. The students usually prepared their arguments by exhausting the resources of the limited libraries and memorizing parts of the speeches or writings of famous ancient characters. The debating society met at night every week to discuss their subjects in a room in which even "the venerable walls were made to shake with the rude and boisterous oratory, which was thought to be Demosthenian in proportion as it was stentorian."³¹

De Bow must have displayed his intellectual talent to his fellow students because at the first meeting he was nominated for president of the society. He declined the nomination for lack of experience, but the society unanimously voted him secretary. He was also appointed to a committee to frame the "laws and constitution" of the society.

The debating subjects ranged widely from moral to political and philosophical issues. Some topics expressed moral concerns over private vices and suggested an alternative for individuals as well as society. For example, "Whether ardent spirits or war caused the most distress," "Which is the strongest pride, love or ambition," "Which has the most influence over man, woman or wealth," "Does love increase or diminish absence," "Whether wealth or liberty

²⁹ Roscoe Rowse, "The Libraries of Nineteenth-Century College Societies," in David Kaser, ed., *Books in America's Past: Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gielsoners* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 25-42.

³⁰ Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of the American*, 38.

³¹ *De Bow's Review*, 29 (September 1860), 391.

has the greater influence over man" and " Was eloquence or music the most effect[sic] upon the human mind." Contemporary politics and economics also afforded interesting topics, such as "Are the whites justifiable in driving the Indians from the United States," "Which deserves most credit Columbus [for] discovering or Washington for defending America?" "Is cotton beneficial to South Carolina or not?" "Does public opinion have the most influence in restraining men from crime?"

Slavery in the United States was always a popular topic among southern college societies from the 1820s to 1860. Up until 1840 the majority of students' opinions in the debate were more in line with antislavery. But this changed after 1841 when most of the students' debates advocated strong proslavery ideas.³²

Once the topics were chosen, the disputants were divided into the affirmative and negative sides. The discussion lasted about three hours and the president would decide the outcome of the debate based on the performance of individuals from both sides and opinions from the audience. Frequently, general discussion and participation from the floor followed the formal debates.³³ On a special occasion like a public debate in the hall of the school, the disputants of both sides were appointed by Mr. Baird. De Bow was chosen many times either to participate in the public debate or to deliver a speech at a "public exhibition" in the school. Unfortunately his side in the debate always lost to its opponents.

De Bow graduated from Cokesbury at the end of 1839 and the following year pursued a college education at the College of Charleston, where he deepened his beliefs and furthered the development of his fledgling political, social and economic ideas.

Created by an Act of the Legislature of South Carolina in 1785, the College of Charleston was one of the three colleges that had originated before the adoption of the Federal Constitution and in response to the growth of republican sentiments. The history of the college was not unusual for Southern colleges at the time, in manifesting a series of conflicts between the administration and State government, a lack of enthusiastic support for the college from the people in the community, and financial hardships. Such conflicts characterized most colleges in

³² Thomas S. Harding, *College Literary Societies: Their Contributions to Higher Education in the United States, 1815-1876* (New York: Pageant Press International, 1971), 194.

³³ *Ibid.*, 192.

America before the 1850s, when they developed close ties to the community. Previously, the college was not regarded as a distinct "community" but as a "school" that was meant to "serve" the outside community by "codifying and inculcating the community's own best principles, and thus to function as an integral part of civic life."³⁴ In a word, the growth of Charleston College typified the relations of politics and intellectual life with the city of Charleston in particular and the state of South Carolina in general.

The revival of local colleges in South Carolina came in the mid-1820s. With a diminishing population and a lagging economy, the city of Charleston, particularly its intellectuals, felt the need to persuade the younger generation to study at home and to be ready to lead the future of the state. The trustees resumed direct control of the College of Charleston and appealed for aid from the State. Many important people of the state contributed to the successful reopening of the College, among them were Henry Lauren Pinckney, the proprietor of the *Mercury* and a son of Charles Pinckney, one of the original members of the board of trustees, who had labored for the establishment of a college in the South in 1770, and Jacob N. Cardozo of the *Southern Patriot*, who coined the term "college of the Metropolis" in his articles to draw support for the college.³⁵ The principal, who was invited to revive Charleston College, was the Reverend Jasper Adams, cousin of John Quincy Adams, who was professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at Brown University, Rhode Island. He came with a strong determination to build up a real college not just to preside over a "grammar"³⁶ school. Dr. Adams, however, knew that the trustees wanted the college to be another "Eton" and not to interfere with the State College at Columbia.

³⁴Wilson Smith, "Apologia pro Alma Matre: The College as Community in Ante-Bellum America," in Stanley Elkins & Eric McKittrick, eds., *The Hofstadter Aegis: A Memorial* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 130-31.

³⁵ *Charleston Mercury*, October 25, 27, 28, 1823; *Southern Patriot*, October 17, 28, 1823 quoted in J.H. Easterby, *History of the College of Charleston*, 53.

³⁶ A grammar school was an intermediate school teaching Latin or English and preparing students for higher education in colleges. The particular names and forms of the grammar school evolved through improvisation, depending on the student population and the particular notions of schooling abroad. See Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1982), 389; and Meyer Reinhold, "Survey of the Scholarship on Classical Traditions in Early America," in John W. Eadie, ed., *Classical Traditions in Early America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), 23.

With his strong determination, Dr. Adams won permission from the trustees to institute and teach a course of collegiate studies. He fervently declared his desire to make the college a permanent "fountain of intelligence and virtue." He revised the curriculum and put more emphasis upon the study of classics which, he believed, was necessary for boys who intended to enter the professions. Instead of adding new courses, he rearranged the school into three new departments. He grouped the three upper classes into the Science department; the freshman and four classes of grammar school into the Classical department; and the lower and upper English schools into the English department. He also introduced scientific curiosity to the community by giving public lectures on "A Lover of Science."³⁷

In one way it proved to be quite a successful institution judging from the professions of graduates, many of whom became successful ministers. Out of one class of graduates, consisting originally of eight, five were to be clergymen, a fact which supports the claim that moral purity rather than intellectual inquiry was the first requirement in a good college in South Carolina.³⁸

De Bow enrolled in Charleston College in 1840, and graduated within three years with first honors. His fellow students called him "Old De Bow," for he was so earnest and untiring in his pursuit of knowledge. According to one description he came to college in the morning, after a long night of study, with "that famous black cravat of his tied loosely around his neck, his hair dishevelled, his keen black eyes sparkling above that nose, ready for any discussion or intellectual tilt."³⁹

De Bow's class of 1843 consisted of 21 students of whom only ten graduated and only two with honors. The small number of college students was not unusual in nineteenth-century Charleston. There were in the city, between 1,000-1,200 white boys of college age, about fifty of whom were attending institutions in other parts of the State, like South Carolina College in Columbia. Another fifty were enrolled in other states, leaving about 900 boys of

³⁷ Easterby, *History of the College of Charleston*, 79-80.

³⁸ Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "Intellectual Life in the 1830s: The Institutional Framework and the Charleston Style," in Michael O'Brien & David Moltke-Hansen eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 240.

³⁹ *De Bow's Review*, 27 (November 1859), 573.

whom only fifty-five enrolled in Charleston College. During the period from 1830s to 1850s, the number of matriculates from the College was less than 400 and graduates only numbered 163.⁴⁰ Many factors accounted for this low turn-out. One was the high standard of scholarship in the program of studies; another was the rigorous classical requirements for admission; a candidate had to be equipped at least with some knowledge of Greek and Latin and the whole of common arithmetic.

A brief look at the courses offered in the College might give some idea of intellectual life and its goals at the time. Similar to those of other southern colleges, the course of studies in Charleston College concentrated upon classical studies, natural philosophy and science, and moral philosophy. The studies of the freshman class included Horace and Cicero, a continuation of prosody and Greek grammar, recitation of passages from Greek and Latin authors, Roman antiquities; Euclid's *Elements* (the first six books); algebra, English grammar, and exercises in public speaking.

The sophomore class continued Horace and added Livy. It also studied Juvenal and Tacitus, Dalzell's *Collectaneo Majora*, Greek antiquities. It undertook recitation of passages from Greek and Latin authors, translations in prose and verse from Greek and Latin authors, and translations into Latin of passages from English authors. In addition to Euclid's *Elements*, 11th and 12th books, the class studied plane and spherical trigonometry, practical mathematics, including logarithms, measure of heights, distances, surfaces and solids. There were also subjects on navigation, gunnery, and ancient and modern geography.

The junior class studied rhetoric and belles lettres, natural philosophy, and natural history. The studies of the Senior Class included moral philosophy, comprehending pneumatology (in which may be included logic); metaphysics, ethics, natural religion, jurisprudence, politics, and political economy.⁴¹ For the senior class, moral philosophy was the central subject. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the subject had gained recognition in university curricula in Europe and later America. The *Encyclopaedia Americana* in 1849 defined "moral philosophy" as "the science which treats the motives and rules of human actions,

⁴⁰ Easterby, *History of the College of Charleston*, 129.

⁴¹ From the *City Gazette*, December 25, 1805, quoted in Easterby, *History of the College of Charleston*, 54.

and of the ends to which they ought to be directed."⁴² Moral philosophy (ethics) insisted on the unity of knowledge and the benevolence of God. In the course of study, it came to dominate logic, divinity, and metaphysics. It was an age when man learned about himself, nature, and God less through the Bible and philosophical speculation than through the use of reason and intuition and the study of nature, including human nature itself.⁴³

Donald Meyer writes that the rise of textbook moralism in nineteenth-century America was a response to social and economic changes that created the material basis for the modern nation. Academic moral philosophers thus wanted to make certain that traditional virtues and values would not be forgotten as the moral groundwork for social progress and that morality remained "the common law of the country." In other words they attempted "to make the Enlightenment safe for democracy."⁴⁴

During De Bow's enrollment in the College of Charleston, there were seven members of the faculty; President William T. Brantley, D.D., Horry professor of Moral, Intellectual, and Political Philosophy; Francis W. Capers, M.A., professor of Mathematics and Civil Engineering; Lewis R. Gibbes, M.D., professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy; William Hawkesworth, M.A., professor of Latin and Greek languages; William Hume, M.D. professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy and Mitchell King, B.A., LL.D., acting President and William P. Miles, M.A., assistant professor of Mathematics.

President Brantley, an experienced teacher was born in Chatham County, North Carolina, and graduated from the South Carolina College in 1808. First elected pastor of the Baptist Church in Beaufort, South Carolina, he soon was chosen president of the Beaufort College grammar school. In 1837 he became minister of the First Baptist Church in Charleston. Quiet and unobtrusive in character, he calmly managed all the affairs of the college. De Bow

⁴² Quoted in D.H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience: The Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), x.

⁴³ Frederick Rudolph, *Curriculum: A History of*, 40; see also Donald Meyer, *The instructed Conscience*, 1-13.

⁴⁴ Donald H. Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience*, 10.

still fondly cherished his memory many years after his graduation, especially his advice that, "*anticipation* is ever running before, to muddy the stream in which *reality* will drink."⁴⁵

Professor Lewis Gibbes, a well-known scientist of South Carolina, was a native of Charleston. Educated first at the University of Pennsylvania, he later graduated with first honors from South Carolina College in 1829. He also received a degree in medicine and made many contributions to biology, chemistry, and astronomy. De Bow remembered him as "the smallest man of the faculty, but no students dared to trifle with him. Intellectually his proportions are large."⁴⁶ He taught mainly the senior class.

William Hawkesworth was an Irishman and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. He was a good disciplinarian and a meticulous scholar. He remained in the College of Charleston for 28 years. According to De Bow, Professor Hawkesworth was "our early friend and guide in classic fields, and it cheers us to recur again to such scenes. A purer, nobler specimen of manhood never lived--a nature generous and confiding, a patience untiring and inexhaustible, a heart full of every kindly sympathy. In classic literature few men in our country have accumulated such stores and hold them so unobtrusively. Never scholar more enthusiastic, never preceptor more devoted to the student's interest, or capable of advancing him to higher perfection. This is but a poor tribute from us, who are so much indebted..."⁴⁷

The warm relations between Professor Hawkesworth and his students was also expressed in a letter and a gift presented to him by the junior class at the end of the academic year. The letter, signed by 12 students, lamented that it was time to discontinue as students of his and they were desirous of returning their gratitude. While still retaining their respect and affection, they wrote "any disagreeable occurrences which have taken place while we were under your tuition have been swept away in the tide of oblivion." Then they offered him the volumes of their writings "as a mask of our unfeigned regard and lasting affection towards one who has

⁴⁵ "The Earth and Man," an address before the Cliosophic Society of the College of Charleston, November 15, 1850, reprinted in *De Bow's Review*, 10 (March 1851), 297. Original emphasis.

⁴⁶ *De Bow's Review*, 8 (February 1850), 206.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 206.

devoted so much attention towards us and always manifested such care for our interest and instruction."⁴⁸

The main source of De Bow's social and political ideas was Scottish philosophy. The evidence of the intellectual influence from the Enlightenment in general and Scottish philosophy in particular can be seen from De Bow's college experience. He listed a course of reading which was divided into five areas; first, on history: Shuchford's *Connexions*; Prideause; Moshemis's *History*; Gillies' *History of Greece*; Hoakes' *History of Rome*; Gibbon's *Rise and Fall*; Livy; Tacitus; Grevies' *History of 12 Caezars*; Robertson & Bancroft & Botta, *America*; Hume's *England*; Simms's *South Carolina*; and Raynal's *Reflection on American Revolution*. Second, metaphysics: Locke, Reid, and Dugald Stewart. Third, moral philosophy: Blair's *Lectures*; Lord Kames; Campble's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*; Allison on *Taste*; and Burke on *the Sublime*. Fourth, theology: Paley's *Natural Theology*; Paley's *Moral Philosophy*; Butler's *Analogy*; and Grotius de Veritale. Finally, on law: Blackstone's *Commentaries*. In addition to this reading list, he also read or became acquainted with many other thinkers and writers over the course of his four years of study at the College of Charleston. For example, Schlegel, Milton, Rollin, Lord Kames, Hume, Foster, Fittler, Locke, Mill, and Hobbes.

The authors to whom De Bow frequently referred were the Scottish common-sense authors whose philosophy was the most influential on the nineteenth-century American mind, in particular, the Scottish Realists who introduced Bacon's scientific method into the intellectual community. The Scottish philosophy satisfied the spiritual and intellectual needs of American intellectuals who were beset by the changing social and economic conditions of the nation. The rapid growth and expansion of the country in the Jacksonian era had created conditions for the growth of optimism and a new sense of confidence in man's power to shape his destiny. With the passing of the New England theology, in particular the image of an "angry God" and a powerful predestining God, it was clear that man must be responsible for conditions of both his soul and his world. Such a situation created a dilemma for Americans who could not easily

⁴⁸ A letter dated February 22, 1842 signed by the following: Jacob William chairman, De Bow, Dickson, Gemais, Hunt, Hunt, Lucas, Mulligan, Ravenal, Ravenal, Snowden, Wagner, Wilow, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

reconcile belief in God and confidence in man. In addition, the spiritual crisis was complicated by an increasing awareness of the practical and theoretical achievements of science which produced further questions about the criteria of knowledge, for example, were scientific knowledge and religious truth analogous and complementary? One important philosophical inquiry in the South, then, was the issue of reason and faith. American intellectuals recognized the roots of this epistemological question which characterized European philosophical debates in the previous two centuries. Southern intellectuals, however, found that Locke, Berkeley, Hobbes and Hume had provided no satisfactory answers to the question. It was Locke who argued that knowledge came from sensory experiences or ideas. He failed to explain the nature of the relationship between ideas and reality for if objective realities originated in the idea, then the world that we perceived was nothing but a collection of ideas. Another complication was introduced by Hume who challenged that a mind which knew only its own perceptions had no certain knowledge of objective realities. He provided skepticism against Locke's epistemology and emphasized the primacy of senses. But Hume's skepticism also led to the extreme conclusion that in the end the world was nothing but an illusion. The Scottish Realism of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, however, came to the rescue of southern intellectuals, arguing that it was consciousness, a combination of perception and sensation, that discerns realities, not simply ideas. Scottish Realism declared that the mind could recognize both material and spiritual reality, and that scientific empiricism and moral intuitionism were compatible. Scottish philosophy therefore assured southerners the existence of man and his place in a changing world.⁴⁹

It is difficult though to trace conclusively specific writers who influenced southern intellectuals because of the eclectic borrowings from various writers in different time and places.⁵⁰ This problem, which was common not just in the South in nineteenth-century

⁴⁹ E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture 1795-1860* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978), 110-18; Theodore D. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); and Drew Faust, *A Sacred Circle*, 61-2. For the influence of Scottish philosophy in the North, see Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics: Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers before the Civil War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956).

⁵⁰ Robert C. McLean, *George Tucker: Moral Philosopher and Man of Letters*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 117.

America, was partly the consequence of the idea that history was "philosophy teaching by examples," and therefore the use of historical events for moral teaching was more important than a "proper" reconstruction of the objective past or a detailed reference of authors.⁵¹

As evidenced in De Bow's college writings, his social philosophy, including concepts of society, human nature and the state, was informed by the ideas of the American Enlightenment, particularly Scottish Realism, and Evangelical Protestantism. The slaveholders' world view served as a general frame of reference for most southern intellectuals regarding the ideas of a proper social order and political values of society and its individual members. Like other American intellectuals of the time, De Bow borrowed a variety of political, economic and social ideas from a number of classical Greek and Roman philosophers as well as English and Scottish writers of modern times. But he modified the borrowed ideas to construct a new set of internal logics and arguments so that these new arguments could stand on their own in the essentially mature slave society of the South.

Nineteenth-century social thought was greatly influenced by the scientific method of both Bacon's analysis of observed empirical evidence, and Newton's principles of philosophical inquiry and synthesis. The vogue of "Baconianism" in America, according to Theodore Bozeman, came with the importation of the philosophical work of Thomas Reid and of the emerging Scottish School of common-sense Realism to which his thought gave rise.⁵² An excerpt from De Bow's lecture notes while in the senior class in the College of Charleston in 1842, reveals the extent of the influence of the scientific method. De Bow stated that "the peculiar"⁵³ nature of man was such that he could not exist long without paying some regard to

⁵¹ Henry Steele Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment* (New York: George Braziller, 1975), 125.

⁵² Theodore D. Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science*, 3-31.

⁵³ The word "peculiar" in that time, I think, was being used in a different meaning from what we understand in the present. The way southerners used the word comes close to the oldest meaning of the fifteenth century, that is one's own or something that belongs naturally to a particular place and time. In the sixteenth century, "peculiar" meant "individual, particular;" in the seventeenth century it meant "uncommon and odd." See C.T. Onions ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, (New York: The Clarendon Press, 1966). The last meaning has thus been used by twentieth century American historians to mean the "strange" or "abnormal" system of labor in the Old South. Notice also the change of positive and proud mood of the old meaning to the degrading and sarcastic one of the new usage.

the changes which were constantly taking place around him. Once attracted by his social environment, man was finally driven to start thinking and studying things around him in accordance with an "innate active principle." He soon began, after some experience with the real world, to classify and arrange what he had seen and perceived in the real world. De Bow thus conceived of science as the classification and arrangement of the various phenomena which are presented in the universe, and the relations which they sustain with respect to each other and to man.⁵⁴

De Bow believed that society, as well as politics and history, could be reduced to science. In his commonplace book he copied the definition of science from Thomas Dick's *Philosophy of a Future State*.⁵⁵ He wrote that science was "an inquiry after God" and that the book had beautifully described its nature and end.

The principles of one science run into another, and reflect a mutual lustre on each other, so that all the sciences when properly conducted, and viewed in their true light, have but one objective view, viz to ascertain the fact of existing in the universe, their connections and relations, the laws by which they are governed and the illustrations they afford of the power, wisdom and benevolence of the Creator.⁵⁶

Once we can locate the facts of society then we can conceptualize, by means of inductive method, the history of mankind into a "general proposition" or "the law of social existence" that every society progresses from a barbarian stage to a civilized stage, from a simple natural form of living to a complex social organization of civilized state.

Science, De Bow noted, has been broken up into various subjects. Individuals may confine their attention to one or more of these subjects, disregarding the rest, because all subjects are mutually related, they throw light upon each other. Such a belief convinced De Bow that

⁵⁴ "Lecture by Dr. Gibbes," March 1842, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁵⁵ Thomas Dick (1774-1857) was a scientific writer in the secession church of Scotland. He wrote a number of books on scientific, philosophical and religious matters. His lucidity and unpretentious style acquired him prompt and wide popularity both in Scotland and in the United States.

⁵⁶ *Journal*, 1840, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

even in confining one's attention to one subject, one could still be much aided by the principles and facts collected in another branch and subject. This line of "scientific" thinking would be very influential upon his writings in the coming sectional political conflicts with the North.

De Bow then divided science into two parts. The first obvious division concerns "those substances which we gain a knowledge of by the senses, which possess extension, figure, solidity, divisibility, are termed matter." The second concerns those substances which possess the qualities that are termed mind. De Bow seemed excited about the differences between matter and mind, which allowed him to use the "scientific truth" to make an analogy between science and southern society. He found the unity of matter and mind similar to the one in his society. Both shared the same character, that is, the one was active and the other passive. "The one the master and the other the slave."⁵⁷

The concept of science proved to be essential in De Bow's thought, particularly in his understanding and dissemination of political economy in the South. It gave him the assurance of the correctness of the analysis into the "true" nature of economic issues and consequently provided him with the "right" policies or remedies for the state. Crucial to this idea was the knowledge and application of mathematics in the study of public policies. One means to enter the world of science, he believed, was "a sound and sufficient knowledge of mathematics, the great instrument of all exact inquiry, without which no man can ever make such advances in this or any other of the higher departments of science."⁵⁸ Scientific investigation thus enabled De Bow later to proclaim the "precision" and "accuracy" of his studies and proposed policies.

It is clear that educated Southerners prided themselves on their classical education and knowledge, which was an essential part of a liberal education. The commonly held goal of classical studies in the nation was "to promote the improvement of the faculties of the mind."⁵⁹ Yet in the Old South the emphasis upon the study of the classics was more pronounced than in

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ "Investigations in Astronomy and Physical Science," *De Bow's Review* 8 (February 1850), 190.

⁵⁹ *Southern Quarterly Review* 2 (July 1842), 72; George Bancroft said, "to sharpen and invigorate the faculties of the mind," see his "Value of Classical Learning," *North American Review*, 19 (July 1824), 125-137.

the North. According to Hugh S. Legaré, the most learned classicist of Charleston, the object of classical learning was

to make accomplished, elegant and learned men--to chasten and to discipline genius, to refine the taste, to quicken the perceptions of decorum and propriety, to purify and exalt the moral sentiments, to fill the soul with a deep love of the beautiful both in moral and material nature, to lift up the aspirations of man to objects that are worthy of his noble faculties and his immortal destiny--in a word, to raise him as far as possible above those selfish and sensual propensities, and those grovelling pursuits, and that mental blindness and coarseness and apathy, which degrade the savage and the boor to a condition but a little higher than that of the brutes that perish.⁶⁰

To De Bow, the classics were an important source of knowledge which served as a framework for the development of his political and social ideas especially on the defense of the slave system in the South. He found in Aristotle the notions of social harmony based on unequal relations between the slave and citizen. The Roman republic offered him the best example of the strength and weaknesses of the republican form of government.⁶¹ When contemplating the political condition of the union in 1860, De Bow had this to say, that "the Roman empire, in its most debauched and basest times, never sunk half so low in venality, corruption, and vulgarity, as our federal government has sunk."⁶²

Moreover, it was the slave society of antiquity that gave birth to the civilization of the world. In fact, southerners asserted, Greece and Rome were southern states in Europe, and possessed temperatures as high as the American South. Thus "the civilization of the world," De

⁶⁰ Hugh S. Legaré, "Classical Learning," *Writings of Hugh Swinton Legaré*, ed. His Sister (Charleston, S.C.: Burges & James, 1845), 24.

⁶¹ See the influence of Greek on southern political ideas in Vernon L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, Vol 2, 57-130; Edwin A. Miles, "The Old South and the Classical World," *North Carolina Historical Review*, 48 (Summer 1971), 258-75; Ed Winfield Parks, *Segments of Southern Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1938), 156-71; and Richard Lounsbury, "Ludibria Rerum Mortalium: Charlestonian Intellectuals and Their Classics," in O'Brien and Moltke-Hansen, ed., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, 335-348.

⁶² *De Bow's Review*, 29 (October 1860), 535. A more detail discussion of De Bow's political ideas is in chapter 4.

Bow wrote, "has come from the South as all history shows."⁶³ Undoubtedly, he proclaimed, the South possessed a spiritual kinship with the famed "southern slave states" of antiquity.⁶⁴

Thus classical references were hurled in Congress, the State Assembly, debating halls, and at conventions, as an effective and sophisticated social and political language to support or reproach one's friends or foes. In the Southern Convention at Vicksburg for the reopening of the African slave trade, Henry S. Foote, of Mississippi, who opposed the proposal to reopen the slave trade, in his speech, chided De Bow for calling "Mr. Calhoun the Palinurus of the South." He reminded De Bow that, from the pages of Virgil, "Palinurus tumbled in the middle of the night from his position, fell into mid-ocean and was drowned. He met with a most unworthy and discreditable fate." A northern man had once charged Calhoun in the Senate of the United States with the same name, but Foote never expected "to hear a native born South Carolinian, in an assembly like this, repeat the affront." Thus Foote assured the Convention that he was here to vindicate Calhoun against that epithet, and hoped that this would be the last time it ever was applied to him.⁶⁵

Thus far we have examined De Bow's college life and some salient aspects of the Cokesbury school and Charleston College, which provided most of his formal education. But he was never only a product of southern colleges, for his specific ideas and general world view, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, also constituted a microcosm of the social relations of the Old South.

Like his colleagues of the same generation, De Bow had been wholly brought up emotionally and intellectually within the slaveholders' world view. Southern slave society had transformed and modified the mainstream of the American mind into its own metaphysical thought that was at odds with the modern world and bourgeois ideas. Southern slave society inculcated in him the rationale and sensibilities of the proper social order of the South.⁶⁶

⁶³ *De Bow's Review*, 7 (September 1849), 229.

⁶⁴ *De Bow's Review*, 11 (December 1851), 681.

⁶⁵ *De Bow's Review*, 27 (July 1859), 216.

⁶⁶ Unlike previous generations, De Bow never really experienced the dilemma of the southern intellectual as that of his more senior colleagues of a "Sacred Circle." George Tucker, for example, had gone through a series of ideological conversion from anti-slavery to pro-slavery. See Robert C. McLean, *Gorge*

Intellectually, he grew up steadily in the world that had already made up its mind and defined its proper social order. It did not, therefore, take him long to realize what the future of his society and his commitment to that society would be.

CHAPTER IV

THE MIND OF DE BOW

The thing that hath been, it is that
which shall be; and that which is done is
that which shall be done: and there is no
new thing under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

This chapter will discuss De Bow's social philosophy, including concepts of society, human nature and the state, concepts which are integral to an understanding of his economic thought. De Bow's social and political ideas, as shown earlier, were informed mainly by the ideas of Scottish Realism, and were shaped by the slaveholders' world view. In order to make a case for social and economic development, De Bow, in the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, had to confront a set of presuppositions about man and his relations to society. The centrality of these presuppositions in relation to De Bow's economic theories and his prescription for development of the South cannot be overstated. For in them is contained the fundamentally Aristotelian notion of human nature which underpinned De Bow's concept of a slave society. The difficulty of reconciling these concepts within the nineteenth century world of a developed capitalist system and a bourgeois ideology based on the principles of equality of individuals and of man's property in himself, will become clearer in this chapter as well as in the rest of this essay.

The primary investigation of social, economic and political issues, as practiced by the Enlightenment philosophers and their disciples in the nineteenth century, always began with "nature," "man" and "society." Accordingly De Bow begins his discussion with these issues. It will become apparent very quickly, however, that De Bow's definition of man includes rather contradictory tendencies; man's nature is both fixed and universal across time (as revealed in history) and yet it is changeable to the extent that it can be transformed from a ball of passion to a developed state of "reasonableness." Man is alternately hopeless and desperate, yet proud and full of potential. Partly the conflicting depictions reflect De Bow's beliefs as they change over

time, but partly they are conflictual because they reflect the paradoxical thinking prevalent in the nineteenth-century American South.

To De Bow, human life was full of contradictions; birth and death, progress and decline, and happiness and misery--the "mysteries" of human nature and the "wondrous vicissitudes of life." For as De Bow writes, even though man could grasp all the concentrated wisdom of the world, he was but a "creature of circumstances, formed and transformed to suit each succeeding revolution of time, limited in perception, bounded in view, chained immovably down to the shallow surface of a planet, so inconsiderable in dimension as to be likened to a drop in the vast bucket of the ocean, a grain of sand in the scab of a thousand worlds." Essentially man was dependent upon a "thousand circumstances" for support, happiness, and existence.

In the next breath, however, De Bow portrays man as being able to imagine himself on equal footing with God. For worthless as he might be, man lived "with proud and haughty airs, through the span of his existence, scoffing at the voice of reason, stilling the whispering of conscience, spurning all semblance of dependence from his thoughts, and with a prowess equal in his fancy to that of the supreme and omnipotent ruler, he cares for the horrors of no terrific storm, heeds the frownings of no gale of dark adversity, but buckling on his armour, he battles fiercely and with stern defiance against time--death and eternity."¹

De Bow's picture of human nature thus was "darkly and sullenly wild." De Bow attributes the depraved existence of man to the fact that the mind without the guidance of virtue fell victim to the four monsters; vanity, love, envy, and pride.² Man who scoffs at the voice of reason and ignores his conscience remains vulnerable to his passions. The "unpredictability" of man who was changed with each circumstance and who fell prey to his passions was too much for De Bow to abide. The passions had to be brought under control, but this was possible only by improving the mind.

Since De Bow thought the mind was the most important factor in social progress, it was essential that it be trained and refined through the judicious use of reason. But how far should this "training" go? Just what were the consequences of this refined and reasoning man?

¹ "The Life of Man," An oration delivered at Cokesbury school, August 2, 1839, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

² *Ibid.*

As De Bow believed, nature rendered men unequal. For him, it was impossible that men could be equal because they were created with dissimilarities in their faculties and constitutions. In order to make men equal, he challenged, one had to change the 'peculiar' constitutions of men, both body and mind. "He must revolutionize the mind, De Bow said, and "he must overthrow the *established orders of nature*,"³ and recreate what he could not remodel. This he believed was absolutely beyond the power of man. No matter what man knows about the laws of man and society, he cannot change the order of nature or alter social order according to one's desire. Man can change his society only to conform to God's law of nature, not against it.

Yet De Bow believed the course of man's life was progress, particularly the development of the mind. This could be achieved by education, the objective of which was to strengthen the powers of mind and to improve it by exercise and cultivation the most difficult of all things in man's life--"the command of oneself." For De Bow believed education improves the mind, softens and refines the fiercer passions of human nature, and raises man to a station "but little lower than the angels." In his words, "its object is not so much to do us in the accumulation of paltry and perishable wealth, which at best can only confer transient enjoyment, but to improve and expand the mind by exercise and cultivation, so as to enable us to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with composure and equanimity, and to fit us for scenes of usefulness and virtue!"

But De Bow also realized that this idea of transforming man had serious implications for his faith. In the course of a debate at Cokesbury, De Bow discussed the merits of moral versus physical sublimity, and in so doing illustrated this problem. De Bow makes the "mistake" of revealing what might be interpreted as both his hope for and faith in man. He runs into trouble very quickly for his argument suggests that man's creative powers are equal to if not greater than God's. It is a very interesting incident indeed for it tells us a great deal about the dilemmas of an ambitious adolescent trying to reconcile his faith in God with his faith in mankind in an age of progress when possibilities seemed limitless.

De Bow begins by defining sublimity as "anything that strikes the mind with wonder and with admiration, though there may be different grades of sublimity, any cause that produces

³ Emphasis added.

this effect, strictly may be termed sublime," He then proceeds with his propositions about man and society. First, "that but for the labor of man, he must have remained in a dark and heathenish state, and the world a wilderness barren and uninviting." Second, "that man's opinions are various, his admiration of any object springing in a greater degree from his accurate knowledge of the causes which tend to produce it, than from the real appearance of the object itself." Third, "that in a state of nature, man from his wrong conceptions and gross ignorance, from his distorted views of deity is led into absurdities of the most debasing nature, and views the most sublime object without experiencing those emotions of rapture, excited in others by the influence of 'the physical sublime.'" ⁴ Furthermore, De Bow contended that the moral rather than the physical sublime exercised the deeper influence upon mankind.

De Bow illustrated various kinds of moral sublimity which could easily be discerned. The first group of examples of moral sublimity was recognized in "deeds of bravery, philanthropy, patriotism, heroism, self-government and benevolence." The second group consisted of "the works of art, construction of vast edifices, of towns, of the mechanism of intricate machinery, philosophical apparatus, the discovery and progress of science." The final example of moral sublimity was to be found in writings, poetry and in eloquence. Supporting his arguments with an army of classical heroes, De Bow concluded that all of these deeds and acts affected human hearts more sublimely than the most imposing spectacle in nature, were they the Alps or the Ardes, the Avalanche, the Maelstrom, the ocean, the cloud or the comet. Consequently, he concluded that man had performed work that, in its appearance, was magnificent and beautiful, no less so than that of nature itself. The implication of this argument is that man is capable of producing something greater than that which God created, namely nature. De Bow learned very quickly just how difficult it was to maintain this position, however, when in the debating hall, he tried to discredit the physical sublime of nature by quoting "the impious exclamation of the Frenchman: 'God is great, but man is greater than God.'" Naturally this infamous quotation caused a furor among the audience. He expressed his regret later that "this was very injudiciously quoted. The circumstance yet was told by an excellent Christian, on whose veracity I could rely. The impression went abroad after I had spoken the speech that I had

⁴ "Does the Moral or the Physical Sublime affect the Heart in the Greater Degree." Delivered in a public debate at the Cokesbury school, October 18, 1839, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

pronounced man to be greater than God. The context however will prove my innocence, and the want of comprehension or honesty in *others*. But after all I deserve censure for my folly."⁵ This incident, which, in essence, reflected the conciliation of science and religion in the southern mind of the time, again showed the impact of religious authority on De Bow's intellectual life.⁶

Central to De Bow's social philosophy was the belief that man was by nature unequal. As God's creature, man was endowed with faculties that differentiated him from other animals. Dissimilarities in man's faculties also led to differences among men. Some were superior in certain respects to their neighbors, and others were inferior. The nature of man was based on two natural conditions; one the temperament of his body and another the attributes of his mind. One individual's constitution was weak and indolent, another robust and active. "One strenuously declines all intercourse and communion with knowledge; crawls as the worm upon the surface of the earth. Another grasps it with a giant fangs, and soars with the eagle's wings above the limit of the cloud."⁷

It is a small step indeed from this understanding of man to an argument for a society and government which recognized the fundamental inequalities of man, namely a society with masters and slaves. In addition, such human deficiencies and inequalities rule out the applicability of natural law, which, for De Bow, was "to govern individuals in their conduct towards each other previous to the formation of society."⁸ In such a situation, the natural law was not applicable in its fullest extent, and binding upon societies of individuals or states in their mutual relations. De Bow believed that rights and equality were not the rule for everybody and society.⁹ The rule in the one instance might not be suitable for the other because individuals and

⁵ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

⁶ See the impact of science on southern intellectuals' religious beliefs in Drew Gilpin Faust, *A Sacred Circle: The Dilemma of the Intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 61-86.

⁷ "Does the Moral or the Physical Sublime affect the Heart...", in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ George F. Holmes, a noted scholar of the South, expressed a similar idea when he said that freedom was not a right but a privilege man earned by demonstrating himself able to suppress the "profound corruption" that was the essence of human nature. See Faust, *A Sacred Circle*, 84.

communities were so essentially dissimilar and unequal.¹⁰ He rejected the principles of both natural rights and social contract because of their fundamentally egalitarian premises which were, according to De Bow, against God's law and history.

For De Bow, the origins of man and society were not at all a question to be investigated or probed since they had already been proved and established as nothing but truths and God's nature. His Protestant faith had provided him with basic "truths" about man and society as southern clergy proclaimed that natural theology was absolutely compatible with "rationalism." In a sense, one can say that the 'naturalization of Protestantism' characterized De Bow's social and political thought. Nature in itself, De Bow thought, only gives the elements of a thing, which must be fashioned into a shape by men. Accordingly, nature, as she is, must be explored and analyzed so that men can collect and arrange facts from which inferences are drawn, and principles fixed.¹¹ But this does not mean that man with the laws of man and society can change the order of nature or alter social order according to one's desire. Man can change his society only to conform to God's law of nature, not against it. To De Bow the order of nature thus is something fixed and correctly established according to God's law.¹²

De Bow conceived of man and society as a 'purely historical being' in a basically desacralized cosmos.¹³ He also rejected the premises of the social contract theorists on the establishment of state and society as fictional and dubious in their historical reliability. He held that it was natural instinct for survival which compelled man to join with others and live together in society. For De Bow, man in the state of nature is helpless and weak because, with minimum relations with others especially in simple production and exchange, he must rely mainly on himself to sustain his living and protect his wealth. Such a state of nature obliges man to protect and defend his life against all adversity inflicted on him by others. Accordingly, men find it

¹⁰ "International Rights of Peace and War," *De Bow's Review* 1 (March 1846), 197.

¹¹ "The Commercial Age," *De Bow's Review* 7 (September 1849), 227.

¹² This argument about the fixed order of nature had not been used since the classical period until the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. See the discussion on the concept of the order of nature and its relations to the philosophy of history in Stephen Toulmin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

¹³ *De Bow's Review* 1 (March 1846), 197.

necessary to unite with others in society, giving them strength and intelligence to protect their lives and pursue their wealth. The necessity for unity constitutes the origin, the advantage, and the end of all society. The first and most important feature of human relations, in De Bow's thought, is reciprocal service among people of various statuses and classes.

The origin of the two cardinal social institutions, society and government, according to the social contract theory, was political in the sense that individual rights to private property and security presupposed the existence of government. So, in place of the social contract, he based his discourse on the origin of government and society on the "metaphysical premises of human nature, order of nature and social order," to use the words of Hugh Legaré,¹⁴ which, at the time, were widely used in the South in the discourse on natural theology and moral philosophy. Since human nature was weak and mediocre, De Bow thought, man therefore needed society, which could turn the weaknesses of human nature into positive social relations or the reciprocal and dependent relations among men. He observed that, "to a lesser or less extent, in the workings of society or government, even the rudest men are everywhere responsible for each other, and participate, whether they will or not, in the consequences of actions and events induced by their agency, their negligence, their culpability, their guilt, or it may be, even their misfortune."¹⁵

The important point for De Bow is to postulate that man is a dependent or social animal and, in order to be able to survive, has created society. Consequently, for society to exist and exert its positive role for the welfare and benefits of its individual members, there must be a need for a social institution like government to legislate and enforce the laws. Like society, government owes its birth to the necessity of preventing and repressing the injuries which the associated individuals had to fear from one another. Unlike society which originates in the wants of men; government originates in their vices. Society tends always to good; government always tends to the absolute misuse of power. Society is the first in its origin and government is

¹⁴ "Classical Learning," in *Writings of Hugh S. Legaré*, ed. by his sister, Vol. II (Charleston, South Carolina: Burges & James, 1845), 32.

¹⁵ "Marine Insurance," *De Bow's Review* 2 (July 1846), 2.

instituted for it, and is but its instrument.¹⁶ Thus, southerners always emphasized the good nature of society against the corrupt nature of government because society was created to preserve man.

Historically, there were two forms of governments, De Bow contended: a monarchy, formed on a natural foundation; and a republic, formed on the opposite, and consequently unnatural foundation. Governments, according to De Bow, consist of individuals which, in turn, are divided into classes. (De Bow's concept of class, however, was simply a category of different individuals grouped together on the basis of their "peculiar natural constitutions," not on their social relations of production or socio-economic status). Accordingly some are born to rule and some to be ruled. Following William Paley's *Principle of Moral Philosophy*, he stated that the origin of government was a gradual development from a simple organization like the family to a more complex and protective military form of government. The weak had to seek protection from the strong. Thus the first governments of the world were decidedly monarchical.

All forms of governments had inborn defects and were susceptible to change, corruption, and perversion. De Bow conceived government as an organism with its own life and, like humans, prey to all of the vicissitudes thereof. Referring to Polybius and Lycurgus as authorities on the various forms of governments, he quoted them as saying that "as all governments proceed primarily from the people, so all mutations in government proceed primarily from the people also." Similarly, noted De Bow, Plato also said that "the grand source" of government mutations was "the intemperance of the human passions." Clearly there was no absolutely good and perfect government. The best among them, according to Polybius, who De Bow believed had made the deepest investigation into the subject, is that one which was composed of an admixture of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy.

Of all governments, De Bow asserted, a republican one was guided and ruled and influenced by human passions far more than the others. Republics owed their origin not to the "established order of nature," but rather to a perversion of that order. For example, the republic

¹⁶ I have relied on a more systematic and elaborate discussion on the origins of society and government made by the Abbé Raynal. De Bow referred to him quite often and had copied some of Raynal's ideas in "The American Revolution" in his commonplace book. See Guillaume Thomas Francois Raynal, *The Revolution of America* (Edinburgh: Printed for S. Doig, 1792).

of Athens owed its origin to the death of Codrus, the republic of Rome to the death of Lucretia, and the republic of America "smells strongly of tea."¹⁷ It was therefore the most fluctuating, inconsistent, and perishable.

De Bow's aversion to republican government came largely from the current perceptions of Americans towards the revolutions in Europe. These revolutions dramatically showed the consequences of an abrupt change in social relations and in political power. Specifically, "the horrors of revolution" that De Bow had in mind were those of the French Revolution, which, in his generation, became an example of political degeneration caused by the violent disruption of social order and hierarchy and the lack of civil responsibilities both on the part of the monarchy and the people. As was the case in France, when social order decayed and social relations were disturbed, political turmoil and revolution ensued. De Bow said, "democracy wings herself away and mobocracy, the scourge of all natural glory, rears her banners upon the pedestal where she presided. Peace, liberty and honor have fled. The ties which bind man to his fellow man are dissolved, and every principle of benevolence and charity in the human breast is crushed. Man prowls for the destruction of his fellow man and all the horrors of revolution walk in its train."¹⁸

Law and order must always be adhered to, De Bow declared, in order for individual members and society as a whole to function harmoniously and live peacefully. Without law and the faithful respect of it, it would be very difficult for leaders and members alike to defend the values and institutions of a society. A leader of a society has the vital role of guiding the whole society to progress and prosperity as long as its members do not obstruct and obliterate the leader's role. He warned of members who were given wrong ideas and information about their society, with the result that a kind of disorderly spirit arose among members. Such evils only ensured the "downfall of any society." De Bow discovered that "a diversity of interest has always been found a sure guarantee of weakness and desolating tendencies of society,"

¹⁷ "Does a Republican Government Contain Within Itself the Seeds of Its Own Destruction," delivered before the Procopian Society of Charleston, July 1840, in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

especially when this diversity was combined with "a total want of all sympathy, a disregard for all law, and order, and a total unacquaintance with the principles in their statute books."¹⁹

As a product of society, De Bow thought forms of government always correspond with those of society. Divided into three stages of social progress, the "savage state" has a simple form of government and legislation, while the "intermediate state" has a complex form, and the "civilized state" has the most complex form of government and profound science of legislation. More significant than the previous stages, De Bow believed, the "civilized state" is the only society that can march toward "the perfection in the economy of States."²⁰ For De Bow, the history of legislation was the history of the human mind or "the proper philosophy of history," and the science of legislation, the noblest and most useful, was "the depository and safeguard of life, liberty, and all the great interests of generations present and to come." Such a science required no experienced men, no study or research, but virtuous men and politicians. He warned that, without virtue, genius and learning were the greatest curses which could be inflicted upon humanity. "Certainly," he said, "a most frightful picture is presented in a *human* being is mind without heart, intellect without sensibility, knowledge unsanctified. How much more terrible than the mere privation of heart is its corruption."²¹ He therefore wrote that the most precious ingredient for the statesman is "virtue," which, he said, "is a meagre word, in whose stead we would gladly substitute *religion*."²²

In De Bow's political philosophy, the state is a moral being, whose essence consists in the principles on which it is constructed. He believed the most important thing in the state are men, not its geography, and government organizations, for it is "men, rather than walls, and fortification, and towns, which constitute the state, it is not mere aggregate masses, without reason, discipline, and intellect." This was the meaning of the state, which southerners

¹⁹ "Valedictory Address to the Demosthenian Society....," in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

²⁰ "Characteristics of the Statesman," *Southern Quarterly Review* 6 (July 1844), 100. De Bow also argued against Dugald Stewart who had maintained that "as society advances to perfection the science of legislation will be simplified," *De Bow's Review* 20 (January 1856), 36.

²¹ *De Bow's Review* 20 (January 1856), 43-44. Original emphasis.

²² *Ibid.*, 43. Original emphasis.

understood, and it corresponded to their beliefs that all people (or society) exist antecedent to the formation of government. The will and welfare of the people, not the government, thus are the source, the center, and the end of all power in the state.²³

Underlying De Bow's social and political ideas was therefore a philosophy of history that provided the necessary frame-work, vocabulary and analytical tools for dissecting social existence and progress. Influenced by Dugald Stewart, a disciple of Thomas Reid, who made Scottish Realism scientific and practical, De Bow emphasized the use of the inductive method and abandoned all speculation about hidden substances and essences. By concentrating entirely on the observable properties of matter and mind, he believed one could discover laws or principles of phenomena. This method enabled De Bow to make generalizations about man and society.

One place to look for these "laws" was history. Like Hume, De Bow believed that mankind was the same in all times and places and the chief use of history was only to discover "the constant and universal principles of human nature."²⁴ History, therefore, was timeless so that it could provide the record of the changing qualities of mankind, which, in turn, enable men to find the universal man and the eternal verities and values of nature. According to De Bow, the course of man's life was progress, from one epoch to another, and from childhood to manhood, under an irresistible impulse like clouds hovering above his head. "The development of time eradicates the mildness of innocence, the virtue of the past." Even though De Bow's ideas of history had never fully developed into a well-defined form and theory, we nevertheless can discern some of his perceptions and understanding of history.

What is history? According to De Bow, history "is a record of the past. The record may be perfect or imperfect; it cannot be true or false. If imperfect it may be a record,...if false, it is no record at all." To this notion any past event which had been recorded was history, even though it might be "imperfect". And such history was always in some forms of written evidence. He referred to Bolingbroke as one of the first to formulate a philosophy of history, which was

²³ "The Commercial Age," *De Bow's Review* 7 (September 1849), 228; See also a discussion of the meaning of the state in *Southern Quarterly Review* 1 (January 1842), 189-90.

²⁴ Quoted in David W. Noble, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 10.

different from history. "If we know all the events that have taken place before us, in their order of antecedence and sequence, we know HISTORY--if we rise higher and regard causation, deduce results and infer general or universal principles, we attain the PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY."²⁵

For De Bow history was to be used as a tool in the improvement of society, a tool like any other scientific instrument. History in itself had no intrinsic value except providing "truths" to men. It must belong to the people, not the historian who discovered the truth from history. Thus history provided a basis for "other truths" to be built upon, or from which they were deduced, enabling the world to march onward and "each generation wiser than its predecessor, but laughed at by the next."²⁶ From the practical point of view, history was said to be "philosophy teaching by example." From this vantage point, it was acceptable for southern intellectuals, as well as other eminent nineteenth century scholars, to alter freely quotations from history books to suit their own tastes and political inclinations and to exercise considerable freedom with "historical fact." Such practice, which is unacceptable to scholars in this day was, Drew Faust explains, a result of the belief among intellectuals that "they possessed special intellectual and moral insight." This allowed them to make use of history to achieve a "high moral lesson" which was worth more than the truth they missed.²⁷

To prove the validity of his arguments De Bow referred to the evidence in the past, that is, history, which, in his view of the time, was "the beacon light to the student--from (her ponderous volumes) which we may glean evidences of an unquestionable nature." So history served as the final and correct word on things of the past. Furthermore, the history from which he drew evidence to support his arguments was only antiquity, especially Roman history. In De Bow's frequent descriptions of history, the ancient past is very close to the modern present, even more so than to the Middle Ages. This verdict reflects his belief in the continuity of modern civilization, in particular the Old South, as a logical heir to the ancient one. For example, De

²⁵ "General Literature: Historical Associations--Louisiana Society," *De Bow's Review* 3 (April 1847), 353. Original emphasis.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 353.

²⁷ Drew Faust, *A Sacred Circle*, 74.

Bow contended that the origin of slavery was found in the earliest advanced nations of antiquity. In fact, he said, slavery was older than ancient Greece and Rome. He attributed the origin of slavery to the time "immediately after the deluge" when God himself condemned the children of Ham to perpetual servitude, using the very Hebrew word which translators rendered "slave."²⁸

Frequently he liked to juxtapose the two terms, antiquity and modernity. This notion of a continuity between ancient and modern history was possible after the growth of comparative history in the eighteenth century, which placed modern Europe as one among many civilizations of the world. The discovery of the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations as sources of the modern world for the first time gave European nations knowledge of themselves as the superior and progressive nations of all past and present civilizations. De Bow thus viewed history as a linear progression of society from the primitive and barbarous stage to the modern and civilized stage, of which America was the latest and most progressive country of the civilized West. It is clear that De Bow's ancient history lacks the historical depth understood by the Humanists when they revived and reinterpreted classical antiquity as the "Golden Age" of Western history. They saw the events of classical history and those of the Bible were not separated from the present simply by a period of time but more important by completely different conditions of life.²⁹ This deficiency in a concrete and particular construction of history characterizes De Bow's ideas of history, which were more general and abstract formulations. His intellectual link to the Greek and Roman antiquities thus was more spiritual and emotional than philosophical.

De Bow, nevertheless, recognized that history was an incomplete record of human greatness. "Caught by the noise, the glitter, of arms and conquests, she lavishes her whole resources upon their heroes, losing sight too often of those other enterprises, less attractive, perhaps, but infinitely more beneficial to mankind."³⁰ In this instance, his notion of the past

²⁸ "The Origin, Progress and Prospects of Slavery," *De Bow's Review* 9 (July 1850), 15. For a detailed discussion of De Bow's ideas on slavery see chapter 7 below.

²⁹ Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1957), 282, quoted in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 67.

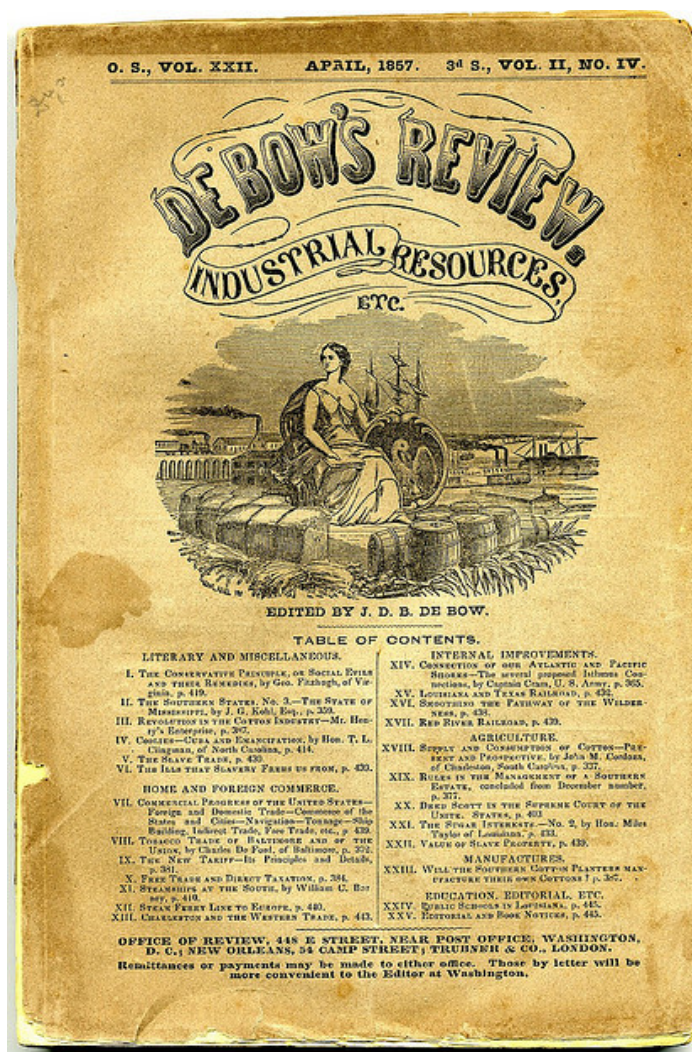
³⁰ *Southern Quarterly Review* 7 (January 1845), 77.

embraced the moral lessons and the virtue of the common man which, unfortunately, had been neglected in history. His visions of the past and future of society, in a sense, were humanistic, representing no particular class but all of humanity.

De Bow's concept of history finally was shattered by the effects of the Civil War, which violently destroyed the institution of slavery, together with its social order, and created a disruption of race and class in the postbellum South. Unable to provide an adequate explanation for this calamity, he thought this was but "an *accident* in the history of a great people."³¹

In conclusion, De Bow expressed many of the beliefs shared by southerners regarding the ideas of politics, government, and society, which emphasized the organic relations between members of a society, and the patriarchal social structure of society and government. De Bow's social and political ideas, which were informed by the slaveholders' world view, therefore broke away from the mainstream of the American liberal philosophy. But his social and political ideas, as well as those of the Old South, were also imbued with many assumptions and ideas of the Enlightenment philosophy particularly Scottish Realism--a contradiction which was a result of the position of the slave South in the modern world. The significant point, however, was that De Bow and southern intellectuals chose to wage their battle on the ground of the slaveholders' world view in order to resolve the contradiction with that of the emerging capitalist.

³¹ *De Bow's Review*, After the War Series 1 (January 1866), 3. Original emphasis.



De Bow's Review (1857)

CHAPTER V

DE BOW AND THE MISSION OF *DE BOW'S REVIEW*

"Progress is the realization of Utopias."
Oscar Wilde¹

Today, as in his own time, De Bow is best known for his famous commercial magazine which became the first and most reputed southern magazine focusing particularly on topics of commerce, manufacturing and agriculture. *De Bow's Review* quickly became a conduit for the dissemination of economic ideas for the improvement of southern society and economy. And, in the decade preceding the Civil War, *De Bow's Review* defended slavery in every possible way, even to the extreme of calling for secession of the South from the Union. Even though the editor strongly declared his policy of neutrality in politics and disdain for 'party politics,' the magazine was in every way essentially political. Following his "liberal" editorial policy, De Bow welcomed opposing viewpoints from readers and other writers, even though he basically favored sectionalism.²

In the decade preceding the Civil War, *De Bow's Review* devoted its energies to the defense of the South's institutions, particularly the slave system, and, when the war broke out, the journal whole-heartedly supported the Confederacy and its cause. In light of the role of *De Bow's Review* during that critical decade, it is not surprising that historians identify and label De Bow as one of the "fire-eaters" among proslavery intellectuals of the Old South. James F. Rhodes wrote that *De Bow's Review* "was one of the most powerful organs of the thinking

¹ An advertisement in the *New York Times*, 2 November 1989, p. D4.

² While his editorial policy was to present both sides of an argument so that the reader could judge for himself, De Bow did not hesitate to publish his personal comments together with an article whenever he wanted to support or disagree with a particular idea. A good example of this practice are the articles by George Fitzhugh of Virginia, a prolific and regular writer who contributed 99 articles to *De Bow's Review*. It was quite clear that in many issues De Bow did not agree with Fitzhugh. So he published them with little editorial remarks.

people and best society of the South."³ Identifying De Bow as a prime advocate for the revival of the African slave trade, Harvey Wish writes that his magazine "stressed Southern nationalism in the economic and cultural spheres."⁴ Others, like David Potter and Robert Durden, see *De Bow's Review* as a principal agency of slavery expansionism in the late 1850s.⁵ But some historians have interpreted De Bow and *De Bow's Review* as "proclaiming the glorious destiny of the United States."⁶ The most recent assessment is that *De Bow's Review* provides evidence for the idea of "capitalist" development in the South. Laurence Shore argues that *De Bow's Review* reflects the thinking of some southerners that "by becoming like the North, the South could maintain its Southern identity." Their only chance of survival, Shore asserts, was to diversify their production beyond cotton production. Thus he assumes that De Bow's ideas on the promotion of manufacturing industry in the South were very similar to those of his northern counterparts.⁷

Even though *De Bow's Review* had gained wide recognition throughout the South and North as the only southern commercial magazine, De Bow never developed a serious and rigorous political or economic theory in the twenty-two years or so of his career. De Bow's writings in the *Review* covered a wide range of topics from politics, for example, the character of the statesman,⁸ international rights of peace and war, to economics, for example, theories of

³ James F. Rhodes, *History of the United States since the Compromise of 1850* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 72.

⁴ Harvey Wish, ed. with an Introduction, *Ante-Bellum: Writings of George Fitzhugh and Hinton Rowan Helper on Slavery* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1960), 10.

⁵ Robert F. Durden, "J.D.B. De Bow: Convolutions of a Slavery Expansionist," *Journal of Southern History* 17 (November 1951), 441-61.

⁶ Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946), 41 and passim.

⁷ Laurence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 35.

⁸ De Bow and many of his contemporaries believed that politicians should adhere first to "truth and principle" not political parties. Real statesmen could never become good party managers or loyal party workers since "party loyalists inevitably became obsessed with a self-interested concern for personal power rather than with a disinterested devotion to the general good." See De Bow, "Characteristics of the

taxation, tariff controversy, slave labor, cotton production and manufacturing in the South, to social issues like education, religion, race, and poverty. From the beginning, he made it clear that the magazine would deal only with practical issues that touched people's daily lives not with abstract and theoretical discussions of the economy. The ideology of the magazine thus reflected De Bow's social philosophy and his social commitment to the South.

Before beginning the *Review* De Bow worked briefly for the *Southern Quarterly Review* based in Charleston. Starting in April 1845, De Bow became a self-styled "junior editor" of the famous *Review*, but his promising career there lasted only a few months. One of his articles stirred criticisms in the state and threatened political division between the publisher and the readers of the *Review*. Entitled "Carolina Political Annals," it was a review article of two books on political history, *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, edited by Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord and *History of the Revolt of the American Colonies*, by George Chalmers. It touched off a controversy over the role of the Union party in South Carolina. The piece traced the political history of South Carolina from its early days in the colonial period down to the 1840s. Full of fervent criticisms, sprinkled with youthful patriotism and a strong romantic streak, the article described the Union party of South Carolina in 1832 as a "respectable minority" in opposition to nullification. De Bow wrote that the Unionists were no less patriots than the predominant nullifiers, and, "in the last resort, would have clung to the State with Roman devotion." De Bow thus implied that the Union party still held to the "doctrine of paramount state allegiance." This prompted Richard Yeadon, editor of the *Charleston Courier* and a Unionist himself, to object vigorously. He published a letter firmly declaring that the Unionist party of 1832 never adopted the doctrine of "paramount state allegiance." To the contrary, the party had invoked the interposition of the judiciary to guard against this doctrine and succeeded in having it incorporated in the constitutional oath of allegiance.⁹ De Bow's rejoinder led to more responses from Yeadon and others. The proprietor of the *Southern Quarterly Review* finally intervened on the side of the readers by saying that De Bow had not

Statesman," *Southern Quarterly Review* 6 (July 1844), 126; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 54.

⁹ *Charleston Courier*, May 14, 1845; July 22, 1845.

been appointed as editor of the *Review*, and, therefore, had no position and authority in the *Review*. De Bow then resigned from the *Southern Quarterly Review*.

On October 5, 1845, De Bow was selected in absentia as a delegate to the Memphis commercial convention. This event, which he later termed "the turning point of my life," convinced him of the need to found a journal devoted specifically to the problems and development of the economy in the South. The election to the Memphis convention plunged De Bow deep into the study of the South's economic plight.¹⁰ He foresaw the causes of the coming crisis in the economy of the South, namely the decline of the Southern Atlantic states as a result of their dependence on the single-crop system and their inadequate commercial progress. Seeing the need for a means to promote the development of commerce, De Bow was energetic and optimistic about the ideas and goals of the convention. Moreover, the Memphis convention also caused De Bow to shift his interest from the economic problems of the United States as a whole to those of the South. Earlier De Bow had shown interest in the expansion of the United States into the Pacific. His writings had reportedly won praises and excited the attention of British and French statesmen,¹¹ in particular the one on "The Northern Pacific: California and the Oregon Question." The significance of this article was that it exposed De Bow's nationalism and support of the United States' expansion into the Pacific.

Prior to the convention, De Bow wrote a series of seven articles in the *Courier* explaining the aims of the convention. Through these articles, he tried to solicit public support by convincing the *Courier's* audience of the political and economic importance of this event. Significantly, De Bow started off with a description of the continuing sectional conflict between the North and South exemplified in the issues of slavery, tariffs, and the relative commercial

¹⁰ Undated memorandum by De Bow, in *De Bow Papers*, quoted in Diffie Standard, "De Bow's Review, 1846-1880: A Magazine of Southern Opinion," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970), 24.

¹¹ According to Skipper, the article might have been used in a debate in the Chamber of Deputies concerning the effect on France of an Anglo-American war over Oregon. But it is unlikely that the name of De Bow was mentioned since the article was not signed but merely followed by the initial "D." O.C. Skipper, *J.D.B. De Bow: Magazinst of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 15 and footnote 17.

disadvantage of the South. Warning of the coming "crisis," he called attention to the apparent subordinate position of Southern trade vis-a-vis the North, and urged the South to improve its agricultural and manufacturing sectors. His economic ideas, at this time, were simple and practical. The South and West had more wealth than the North, according to De Bow, because agriculture was the basis of all wealth.¹² And he could see this clearly from the average production of 44 bushels of cereal grain to one inhabitant in the South compared to 22 bushels in the Northeast. But because the North monopolized manufacturing, they could secure more wealth and profits from the South. Therefore, De Bow recommended that if the South wanted to shake off this "oppression," it had to break down the monopoly by turning to manufacturing itself.¹³ In order to avoid the crisis and protect southern "institutions" from northern attack, he also urged the construction of a railroad connecting the South with the West. He declared that "the South must sympathise with the West, or *be alone*. The day has passed when a sympathy between the North and the South, or any union of action or of interest has been deemed feasible by the most sanguine."¹⁴ To De Bow, the West came to be a Hercules that would save the South and furnish it with material prosperity. "Sink or swim, it *must be together*," said De Bow, "it is a desirable union--*but whether desirable or not, the progress of things has at last left no other alternatives*."¹⁵

De Bow's article on the Memphis convention provoked another round of criticisms over the question of southern manufacturing, which, De Bow had suggested, might be the last means to improve the economic position of the South. Apparently, some good South Carolinians took his prescription to mean that the South should follow the North's industrialization route and accordingly relinquish a free trade policy in favor of the protective tariff. Such ideas were anathema to the planter class and amounted to treason in the Palmetto state. Obviously De Bow

¹² Although De Bow admitted that agriculture is the *basis* of all wealth, he believed that it is not the only *source* of wealth. In his economic ideas, commerce is the more important *source* of wealth than agriculture. For a detailed discussion of De Bow's economic ideas see chapter 6 below.

¹³ *Charleston Courier*, October 13, 1845.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1845; Original emphasis.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, original emphasis.

was taken aback to find that his zealous loyalty and patriotism to that state were interpreted otherwise and he fiercely fought back by pledging his "state allegiance" together with the "state rights," which he had learned during the "Second Revolution" in South Carolina. But he argued that the declining economy and degenerating political conditions which occurred after the Nullification Crisis in South Carolina now set limits to such extreme political radicalism as secession or nullification. New solutions must be sought instead. De Bow offered his answer for the future of the state and the South:

[T]he State is seeking a more practical and efficacious mode to be relieved of her burthens than she has yet been able to put into operation. If that mode in the last resort is discovered to be manufacturer in her midst, and if that be the only available mode, and we really begin to think so, then let the State go to manufactures at once with all her might--and what we say of the State, we apply to the whole South at large. Why should we suffer these burthens? Even Christian forbearance does not require at our hands a cheek ever turning to the merciless blow. If in spite of all remonstrances the oppressors will not stay their work--if the only weapons by which they can be resisted must be fashioned after the models in their own hands, and used by the tactics which they adopt, righteousness, justice and self defence, the highest and holiest law of Nature, all demand that we should snatch up those weapons and strike the blow which is to make us free. It is only on this principle that we advocate Southern manufactures under a protective tariff, under a revenue tariff we advocate them because, whilst "agriculture is the blessed employment of man," manufactures then is the twin sister, treading together with her ever the ways of 'pleasantness and peace.'-- Southron.

With this fiery response, Richard Yeadon, editor of the *Courier*, who a few months before had had a squabble with De Bow, immediately attached the comment to De Bow's reply that, although in agreement with De Bow's economic development in the South, he had no sympathy with De Bow's "rhapsodies about nullification and secession" in the article. Yeadon was pleased, nevertheless, that De Bow admitted "the snake" [nullification and secession] to be not only "scotch'd but killed."¹⁶

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, October 17, 1845. Original emphasis.

It was at this particular juncture that *De Bow's Review*, a southern magazine devoted to the improvement of agriculture, commerce and manufactures, was deemed absolutely necessary and appropriate. He issued the original circular for the *Review* in Charleston in October, 1845, a month before the delegates convened in Memphis. The *Charleston Courier*, fully supporting De Bow's plan of launching a commercial magazine, stated that De Bow was "already familiar with the literary and business conduct of periodicals; and possesses talent, information and industry, which give high promise of usefulness in the new field he has chosen."¹⁷ To familiarize himself with the issues concerned, De Bow declared that he would make an extensive tour throughout the South and West, including attendance at the Memphis convention.

Thereupon his plan to publish a review received further support and warm encouragement from Calhoun, who decided to preside over this convention and to use it as a platform to announce his new policies for the development of the South and West. Calhoun and the delegates, including De Bow, embarked on a symbolic trip by the river steamer *Maria* from New Orleans to Memphis. De Bow then received advice from Calhoun and others to launch the *Review* from New Orleans, the new flourishing center of commerce in the South, instead of from the declining city of Charleston.¹⁸

The timing of the launching of *De Bow's Review* in 1845 also corresponded with important developments of antebellum southern politics. Politically and economically the South was developing its own discourse, which emphasized its distinctive social system based on plantation slavery. The southern politician who commanded and controlled its "peculiar" politics at that time was John C. Calhoun. According to William Cooper, Calhoun became dissatisfied with the "politics of accommodation" during the period 1830 to 1840 and turned to the "politics of confrontation."¹⁹ The strategy of this politics of confrontation was to unite every political force and politician of the South into one unified political unit in order to represent effectively

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, October 9, 1845.

¹⁸ See more detail regarding the plan for the publication of *De Bow's Review* in Standard, "De Bow's Review, 1846-1880," 24-28.

¹⁹ William Cooper, Jr., *The South and the Politics of Slavery, 1828-1856* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 108.

and defend the South and its free institutions. "It's time," Calhoun said, "the South should overlook all minor differences and unite as one man in the defense of liberty." To Calhoun the goal was a return to the "old State rights Republican doctrine of '98," upon which the constitutional Union was built, with the guarantee of states' rights and the restraint of federal power.

The Memphis convention left its mark on the development of De Bow's economic thought because it made him aware of political and economic issues of the South. That the nature and content of the convention set the tone and direction of his ideas regarding political economy can be seen from a series of articles that appeared in the *Charleston Courier* from October 9-17, 1845. The Memphis convention revived the belief of the previous commercial conventions of the 1830s that the South was in "crisis." The "crisis" to which De Bow alluded was not new. During the first Southern Commercial Convention in 1837, William Dearing, a concerned Georgian, had alarmed the southern merchants, then in the depths of the economic depression, that "a crisis has arrived in the commercial [life] of the South and Southwest."²⁰ De Bow's economic ideas were also formulated in the context of a fear that the approaching economic "crisis," if not remedied, would soon sap the economic basis of the South and result in the decline of the region's economic and political status in the Union.

The political significance of the Memphis convention lay in the main resolutions, which signified an attempt on the part of the South to develop and strengthen its own economy by advocating the importance of railroads and large projects of internal improvements, which would connect all southern states and, most important, connect the South Atlantic seaboard and the Great West.²¹ Ideally, the Memphis convention envisioned something close to an "economic reform" of the South. The language and ideas of the "Memphis Doctrines" advocated expansionism in which the first strategy was to win over the West and the long-term strategy was for the South and West to become the commercial center of the world. De Bow like Calhoun

²⁰ Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Historical and Political Science, series 48, no. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1930), 11.

²¹ Robert Russel writes that "Calhoun understood better than any other southern leader the growing power of the West and the strength of the demand for improvement of Western rivers and harbors." See his *Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840-1861* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1960), 124.

thus envisioned an expansion of southern commerce into South America and Asia as a means to the building of an economic and social basis for the development of agriculture and the preservation of "free institutions" in the South.²²

Two years after the convention, De Bow admitted that the "doctrines and principles of the Memphis convention, while they harmonized with the views of many portions of the Union, did not command the sentiments of a majority of the West or of the Union." In February 1846, Mr. Holmes, of South Carolina, asked permission to present the Memphis resolutions before the House of Representatives, but their reception was opposed. The Report prepared by Calhoun as a chairman of a select committee also met the same fate in the Senate.²³ De Bow admitted that the Memphis principles were too ambitious and some sections were even "condemned as altogether restricted and suicidal to the interests of the West."

It would be interesting to know what De Bow thought about the last condemnation. It is likely that he would not have been convinced by the harsh remarks since he firmly believed that the interests of the West and of the South were naturally mutual. De Bow still had some hope that Congress would accept the resolutions since Calhoun had promised to put more effort into them but, unfortunately, his hope never materialized.

Meantime, the Northeast and Northwest joined forces in a similar fashion by instituting commercial movements of their own, starting with the Chicago convention in 1847, which called for Federally aided internal improvement projects for the region. De Bow called the Memphis and Chicago conventions the "first great Conventions ever held in the Mississippi Valley." In his comparison between the Chicago and Memphis conventions, however, he pointed out what he saw as the opposite aims of the two movements. The Memphis, he said "sought to

²² Henry Nash Smith gives a perceptive analysis of the myth of the West and a "passage to India;" see *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950); Robert E. May points out that in the 1850s manifest destiny became sectionalized. Southern expansionists thought the United States should annex Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Islands; even to South America. *De Bow's Review* envisioned slaves developing the tropical lands, and to create "a chain of slave states from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean." See his *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

²³ Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions, 1837-1859*, 64-5.

conciliate all parties, and agree on some practical plan of action--a compromise, if necessary--which could meet the general approval and hearty co-operation of all sections." The Chicago convention, on the other hand, he criticized as "impractical and injurious," to the South and West, and in no respect adequate to meet the needs of the Northwest and the Great Lakes. The Chicago convention, De Bow said, advocated a system of internal improvements upon western lakes and rivers, which served mainly the rapidly increasing commerce of the Northeast. Reflecting his sectional ideas, De Bow thus concluded that the two conventions represented "the *antagonistic principles*" regarding commercial development of the two regions.²⁴

The end of the Southern Commercial Convention of the 1840s corresponded with the imminent failure of "economic reform" in the South, as formulated in the "Memphis Doctrines," and with the strengthening of ties between the Northwest and the Northeast. The final phase of the Southern Commercial Convention, from 1852-1859, became more openly political in tone and intensified the call for "southern nationalism." To southerners, the nature of "crisis" confronting the South was decidedly political. The aim of the convention, therefore, was no longer reform or compromise with the North. De Bow, in his report to the railroad convention in July 1857, quoted the saying of Jefferson Davis, at Jackson, Mississippi, that the South already felt that in 1860, the monster crisis was to be met. "Then shall American patriotism pass the ordeal of fire."²⁵

It was clear that when De Bow conceived the idea of launching a truly southern journal for the improvement of the region, he intended to use the magazine as an organ for disseminating knowledge pertinent to the prosperity as well as moral and physical advancement of the people of the South. Influenced by the Enlightenment idea of progress, especially Bacon's dictum that "knowledge is power," De Bow also believed that the *Review* should be like a beacon, whose primary function was to "diffuse light."

But his magazine would not be like a star hanging high up in the sky far away from the earth. He repeatedly reminded the reader that the *Review* would emphasize "practical" economics, not theoretical or abstract political economy. This characteristic of the *Review*

²⁴ "The Chicago and Memphis Conventions," *De Bow's Review* 4 (September 1847), 123. Emphasis added.

²⁵ *De Bow's Review* 23 (July 1857), 104.

reflected De Bow's belief that people needed food not intellectual fancies to live on. He even wanted to name the *Review* the "Practical Review," but was discouraged by its inelegant sound. Even though the word "commerce" might be misleading and limited in its social meaning, he finally chose "Commercial Review" because the name was at least wide enough to embrace everything practical in life.²⁶

As a social expression of southern values and beliefs, *De Bow's Review* embodied a popular concept of the time; the idea of "progress." Nineteenth-century intellectuals basically agreed that 'progress' was the inner tendency of history towards an ever more enlightened society. From August Comte who declared that "ideas rule the world" to John Stuart Mill who asserted that "the state of the speculative faculties...essentially determines the moral and political state of the community," the science of society was inseparable from the explanation of its progression.²⁷ For De Bow, the concept of progress was the main underlying principle of his magazine. In his first issue of the *Review*, he clearly stated the purpose of the magazine was "the elucidation of ALL THE GREAT PRINCIPLES OF PROGRESS, in every department of practical life."²⁸ The magazine would "diffuse instruction and light upon interests most practical and important, everything that contributed to the moral and physical advance." He stressed that his ideas were in tune with "the spirit of the age and the country."

In the Memphis convention of 1850, De Bow specified in his address that "the age in which we live is one of great achievements in arts and sciences and in human progress."²⁹ He also declared the age "prudent, thoughtful, and intelligent."³⁰ The last and most important to him in the long run was his faith in "an age of railroads."³¹ Throughout his life, De Bow was

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 (January 1846), 1-4.

²⁷ Hiram Catton, *Politics of Progress: The Origins and Development of the Commercial Republic 1600-1835* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1988), 18.

²⁸ *De Bow's Review* 5 (January 1848), 83. Original emphasis.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 (March 1850), 232.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 (May 1847), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1 (January 1846), 22, 26.

deeply committed to the idea of railroad development as a condition for the growth of manufacturing and commerce in the South. In his enthusiasm for the new transportation, De Bow, in 1852, urged the legislature of Tennessee not to sleep during this age of progress but to construct railroads on the tracks of which "revolves the 'car of progress,' carrying with it light, and life and civilization...."³² Certainly he was a faithful disciple of this doctrine of social progress.

He declared that, "the great law of social existence is progress."³³ This progress was a result of man's practice. As men practiced more they then brought about more improvements in society and politics. Yet man could only make things better, not perfect. To be wise therefore "we must be foolish in an age of progress like this."

Following his concept of social development, which emphasized the primacy of man and society over government, De Bow thought progress should involve improvement of the whole society, in particular the social household or family. He used different terms to explain his idea of progress, like "the perfection of society," and "development" and "improvement" of man's faculties. For De Bow, the idea of progress for the South involved a personal component and was concerned with the moral development of individuals. Progress was not concerned with only material or physical improvement but even more with spiritual development, such as the dissemination of knowledge, which was thought to be a kind of progress and civilization. The advance in knowledge, therefore, was not an end in itself but the means of achieving a more desirable economic condition. Economic progress is the most potent form of the idea of progress because it touches each individual in the most direct of ways. Once it has achieved economic progress, a society can then acquire other forms of progress, as in the arts and science.

According to De Bow, the division of labor in a society necessarily leads to the broad economic classes of "wealthy" and "poor." He postulated that the existence of both classes was an intrinsic necessity if social progress was to be achieved. His idea of "class conflict" is simply conflict of interests between individuals or groups in a community. This conflict was not antagonistic because individuals and groups were aware that no one individual or group could

³² "Railroad Prospects and Progress," *De Bow's Review* 12 (May 1852), 507.

³³ *De Bow's Review* 2 (September 1846), 77.

enjoy all the economic benefits and leave other people in dire poverty. From political experiences, men learned to compromise in order to effect government policy to their best interests. Class conflicts also were minimized by the flexibility in each class. The poor were allowed to compete for material benefits while the wealthy maintained their position. In De Bow's political philosophy there was a kind of dynamic relation between classes but this dynamism had a limit. It only extended so far as it did not disrupt the proper social order. But De Bow's understanding of class relations had no room for slavery since slaves had no need for competition with other classes in securing their living. Their subsistence was provided for by the master. Actually the existence of slavery was even a prerequisite for the dynamic and equal relations between classes in civilized society, according to some southerners, for, as Calhoun stated, "there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other."³⁴

De Bow and southern intellectuals, therefore, did not conceive of progress in the same way as did the Enlightenment thinkers of the previous centuries. Southern slaveholders, as a class, according to Eugene Genovese, were "modern" men who accepted the nineteenth-century world with its ideas of progress and were enthusiastic about the fruits of modern science.³⁵ Accordingly, they redefined the idea of progress to correspond with their society and the master-slave social relations. As a result, southern intellectuals could subscribe to the idea of progress while upholding their conservative ideologies. This was possible because the "genteel or aristocratic" conservatism "hark[ed] back to a better time when the industrial revolution and the egalitarian philosophy had not yet produced their massive social consequences in Europe and the northern states."³⁶ This conservatism embodied a skeptical view of human

³⁴ Calhoun's speech to the Senate in 1837, quoted in James Clarke, "Calhoun and the Concept of the 'Reactionary Enlightenment': An Examination of the *Disquisition on Government*" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Keele, 1982), 299.

³⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, "The Southern Slaveholders' View of the Middle Ages," in Bernard Rosenthal and Paul E. Szarmach eds., *Medievalism in American Culture. Papers of the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*. (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1989), 32.

³⁶ James Farmer, Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University Press, 1986), 154-57.

nature, a desire for order, an organic concept of human society, and a pervasive spiritual and moral orientation, thus assuring southerners of a better future against the increasingly confusing present. Politically, southern intellectuals perceived conservatism as the preservation of the South's social institutions, which guaranteed and protected individuals' political and property rights from the encroachment of others and usurpation by the government. In practice this was primarily a defense of the institution of slavery and states' rights against the attack of the northern abolitionists and politicians.

For southerners, the idea of "progress" was no longer the revolutionary idea that enabled Enlightenment philosophers and their followers to subject old ideas to severe criticism: Enlightenment ideas educated men and demonstrated that once the masses had grasped the enlightened ideas they could change their circumstances. They would see the truth; that is, the reality and power of the ideas. In contrast to the European Enlightenment legacy that served to disrupt the existing order, in the South, the idea of progress served to undergird the world of the slaveholders and to preserve the status quo. De Bow thus emphasized the practical aspect of progress and its contributions to the preservation of peace and order in society.

Notice that De Bow emphasized the fruits of ideas rather than ideas themselves. He argued that progress in the past was possible because people could benefit from those concrete ideas, and used them for practical purposes. He gave an example that from ancient wisdom down to the age of Lord Bacon, "except the light which glittered through the pages of Revelation, there was nothing which evidenced the mighty powers of intellect, such as it is exhibited to us now." Bacon created a new world and a new man to inhabit it. He threw off the shackles of the mind and taught men to think, to reason and to act. He carved out a pathway to science and eventually brought Plato from the clouds down to earth. Ancient philosophy, according to De Bow, was vapid and lifeless. The sages, "like the stars, were wont to give little light, because they were so high." They looked down upon the people for whom "truth never descended from heaven." "But in tearing down the old systems which had kept the human race in ignorance and in bondage, it was the glorious province of Bacon to develop the true system of human effort--the system not of vain speculations and theories--but the system, as one of his followers has termed it, of fruits." Hence Locke, Newton, La Place, Linnaeus, Lavoisier, and the

hundred others great scientists, within a period of a century, had all been employed, with their whole mind and heart, in producing "fruits," for the masses. The whole employment of experimental or inductive philosophy had been to arrive at "truths of practical value in directing the concerns of human life."³⁷

The idea of social progress and prosperity was also central in early American political economists' thought.³⁸ Unlike the British classical political economists who thought the central economic issue was distribution, their American counterparts, faced with no limit on land or population pressure, together with a newly created republican government, believed that political economy was intended for the moral instruction of nations. Political economy was, in the words of Paul Conkin, "the preacher of righteousness." Believing in the process of social progress based on virtue, American political economists, in their economic analysis, relied mainly on the basic issue of social development as based primarily on human nature. Instead of venturing into the social conflict among classes in the analysis of distribution and production as did the Ricardians, American political economists emphasized virtue and self-interest and the harmony of the universe. If governments followed the laws of political economy and if the people were religious and virtuous, there would be an "unending progress" of society, so American political economists believed. Thus the idea of progress influenced the path of political economy in antebellum America.³⁹

In general the objective of *De Bow's Review* was to help direct the progress of commerce in the South. De Bow himself wrote many articles on commerce and its history in the tradition of the classical political economy. According to Adam Smith, the systems of agriculture and commerce had brought about the "progress of opulence" in different ages and nations. To De Bow, commerce, which was the most important system of political economy, augmented the progress and prosperity of nations in different ages. De Bow followed Smith's argument that trade between nations is always advantageous, though not always equally so to both. The

³⁷ "Morse's electro-magnetic telegraph," *De Bow's Review* 1 (February 1846), 133-4.

³⁸ J. R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics* (New York: New York University Press, 1921), 4.

³⁹ Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 114.

advantage of trade lay not in the increase of silver and gold, Smith argued, but on the "increase of the exchangeable value of the annual produce of the land and labor of the country, or the increase of the annual revenue of its inhabitants."⁴⁰ De Bow thus borrowed the concept of exchange value, which was the power of a commodity to buy another use value of other commodities, to explain the centrality of commerce in his political economy. For him, commerce, not agriculture or labor only, was "a source of national wealth." Some political economists derided this idea that commerce was a source of national wealth. They argued that commerce had no "creative power to develop goods or to add a jot or tittle to the *intrinsic* value of a single commodity." De Bow criticized those philosophers as sophists.⁴¹ He argued that the political economist's definition of commerce as "the exchange of equivalent commodities" was too restricted. Commerce was productive because "it adds to exchangeable value." Following Smith's ideas that self-interest leads man to exchange and barter, De Bow argued that commerce performs the important role of bringing together the producer and consumer, who would otherwise never meet. Without the service of commerce, commodities--products of labor--would not be worth their values. He conceived of a commodity as simply a product of labor, which has no specific social relations except that it was capable of being consumed first by the immediate producer and later by a consumer in a market.

It is interesting to note that De Bow did not emphasize the role of self-interest as a legitimate force in a market economy. In fact, he always insisted on the moral aspect of political economy. De Bow talked of Malthus, quoted him as saying that the great general principles of political economy resembled those of morals and politics, as they "were found upon the known passions and prejudices of human nature." Thus the science of political economy was nearer to the science of morals and politics than to that of mathematics.⁴² He said the three great pursuits of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce "civilize" nations and heighten "moral

⁴⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Vol. I (Indianapolis: Liberty Classic, 1981), 489.

⁴¹ De Bow, *The Industrial Resources, Statistics, etc., Vol. I* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Co, 1854; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1966), 308. Original emphasis.

⁴² "The Commercial Age," *De Bow's Review* 7 (September 1849), 232-33.

improvement." Commerce, in particular, leads to the "cultivation of sympathies and creates a community of interest which binds together the whole commercial world."⁴³

The most startling idea about commerce is De Bow's assertion that it "is the parent of civilization." He explained that people were acquainted with but one agency, that is, Christianity which "excels it in perpetuating peace and good will among men, and elevating national character." Christianity had not penetrated into the depths of "savage wilderness" or among the fiercest islands of the ocean; it had not crossed mountains and deserts and had not plunged in the midst of "horrid idolatry, cannibalism, and semi-demonism." But merchants in search of trade did. Consequently, they had gone hand in hand with the missionary and opened up new lands for civilization. In many primitive areas, "commerce, acting as the adjunct or handmaiden of Christianity among the savages there, had transformed them into men and into citizens."⁴⁴ De Bow's expansionism, however, was not the same as that of the English Free-traders, who, during the campaign against the Corn Laws in the late 1830's, pronounced that "Free trade is Jesus Christ."⁴⁵ Rejecting natural law, the English Free-traders based their arguments on the new and ratifying concepts of a mechanism and a market (which would justify and support the expansion of capitalism).⁴⁶ De Bow also denied natural law, but he faithfully believed in God and the law of God, not of the market. Ultimately he placed commerce and individual economic interests under God's will and community interests.

⁴³ "American Legislation, Science, Art and Agriculture," *De Bow's Review* 2 (September 1846), 107.

⁴⁴ "Commerce, Its Origin...", *The Industrial Resources*, Vol.I, 309.

⁴⁵ Karl Marx, in his address on free trade, said that "Dr. Bowring conferred upon all these arguments [against the Corn Laws] the consecration of religion, by exclaiming at a public meeting, "Jesus Christ is Free Trade, and Free Trade is Jesus Christ." See his *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the "Philosophy of Poverty" by M. Proudhon* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 184. Interestingly, Bowring, a disciple of Jeremy Bentham, in 1854 was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to China--also accredited to the courts of Japan, Siam, Vietnam, and Korea--and concurrently Governor, commander-in-chief, and vice-admiral of Hong Kong. Bowring was known for his shrewd diplomatic efforts in successfully bringing Asian countries into the free trade system of western capitalism.

⁴⁶ Rajani Kannepalli Kanth, *Political Economy and Laissez-Faire: Economics and Ideology in the Ricardian Era* (New Jersey: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1986), 81-116; and Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Articles* (London: Verso Editions, 1980), 78-9.

For De Bow, commerce, or a process of exchange, could address the economic problems facing the South, that is, its reliance upon the export of staple crops and import of manufactured goods from Europe, trade which until then had been conducted, he believed, mainly by English and northern merchants. Specifically, he had in mind the interests of the merchant class of the South, which had been exploited by those from outside. Throughout all the southern states, the whole field of commerce had been left open to be occupied exclusively by the "constant stream of adventurers," who came to pocket their profits in the city and before long were ready, "like birds of passage, to be off again, to expend the result of their few years' thrift in beautifying and adorning every other section of the Union than our own." The reasons for this, De Bow stated, were the ignorance of southern merchants of the true nature and dignity of commerce and its elevating influence upon society and that the people of the South had been content with "the once rich but now decaying results of *agriculture*."⁴⁷ To solicit public support for the positive role of the merchant class in society, De Bow pointed out the virtues and honor of merchants acquired through their own works, not from power or offices. He said the world was little acquainted with their important services and their usefulness to the state and society. In fact, the merchants should be a good example for people to learn from because their lives, unlike those of statesmen and commanders, were in a sphere nearer to the common reach. It was therefore more natural for people to imitate the example of the merchants and excel in their own capacities. The merchants' experiences thus were a "true instruction of human life" without the usual pomp and magnificence of representation as that of the histories of statesmen.⁴⁸

De Bow was also the first intellectual in the South who energetically advocated commercial studies in the universities. The course was designed to include the history and progress of commerce, its principles and laws; home and foreign commerce; tariffs, treaties, life insurance, roads, canals, shipping, and revenue, systems of reciprocity; balances of trade; mercantile and navigation systems; colonies and colonial systems; banks, finances, accounts, transportation, book-keeping, principles of merchant law; commerce of nations, ancient and

⁴⁷ "The Commercial Age," 230, 231. Original emphasis.

⁴⁸ "A Professorship of Commerce," *De Bow's Review* 6 (August 1848), 113.

modern; geography of commerce, and commodities of commerce.⁴⁹ The original ideas of commercial studies, according to De Bow, were from Malachy Postlethwayt, the author of *Universal Dictionary of Commerce*, who advocated a mercantile college in Great Britain but whose views were not adopted. De Bow thought without familiarity with products and manufacturing, with the law, as well as knowledge of the tariffs, it was impossible for a merchant to make a correct calculation in his trade. It was ignorant to think that commerce was but a game of chance, where the odds are against the player. De Bow strongly declared that commerce "is a science where skill can scarce fail of its reward." He contended that his adopted state, Louisiana, was "purely commercial" in its character and thus should have taken the lead and sustained the commercial movement in the South. De Bow emphasized the commercial character of Louisiana, showing with statistics, based on the census of 1840, that many people, one in every 13 in New Orleans, were engaged in commercial pursuit. Indeed this average was much higher than in any other state or city in the union.⁵⁰

In addition to economic problems, it is clear that De Bow's ideas of commerce were based on the idea of progress and belief in a hierarchical social order in which peace and prosperity were created and sustained by commerce, which in turn contributed to the refinement of that social order. De Bow thus signified a break from Jeffersonian republican political economy which harbored ambivalent concerns about the role and impact of commerce in American society.⁵¹ For De Bow, commerce was truly a civilizing agent for social progress. He said that the progress of commerce had "considerable influence in polishing the manners of Europeans nations, and in establishing among them order, equal laws, and humanity." Consequently, commerce was a "natural guardian" of the arts and science and thus was the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 111. The average number of people engaged in commercial pursuit in New York was 1 in 27; Philadelphia 1 in 29; Charleston 1 in 43; Boston 1 in 44; and Baltimore 1 in 51.

⁵¹ See J. E. Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); and Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), especially chap. 3.

parent of civilization. In sum, commerce was "the golden girdle of the globe" and the "laws of commerce," by which he meant the same as God's laws, in all times, were one and immutable.⁵²

In conclusion, the birth of *De Bow's Review* was essentially related to the major political and economic developments occurring during the middle of the 1840s. The central figure who influenced the ideological orientation of De Bow and his magazine was Calhoun. *De Bow's Review* thus was conceived as an organ for the dissemination of ideas intended for the improvement of the South's economy. With a strong and progressive economy, including agriculture, commerce and manufacturing, De Bow believed that the South could finally regain its political dominance in national politics, and be able to preserve its institutions, especially slavery. The salient characteristic of *De Bow's Review* was its primary devotion to commerce as the most important means to acquire wealth and prosperity for the South. In order to make the case for economic development in the South, De Bow utilized a social philosophy that contained all the ideas and values of the mature slave society of the South.

⁵² "The Commercial Age," *De Bow's Review* 7 (September 1849), 232-233, 235, 238.

CHAPTER VI

DE BOW AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE OLD SOUTH

"Thus then Political Economy links itself with religion and ethics;
for all that improves man, increasing his power and intelligence,
makes him a more capable producer of wealth,
makes him the better *wealth machine*."

"Slavery and Political Economy,"
De Bow's Review (1856)

Nineteenth-century American political economy has earned a reputation as "distinctive," chiefly because of its combination of practicality and heavy doses of religion. The practical orientation to applied economic science also resulted in the lack of much theoretical development in American political economy. In light of its practical nature it is not surprising then to find many complaints about the "poverty of American thought" upon the subject of political economy in the nineteenth century.¹ If this criticism is registered against American political economy in general, it has been even more frequently made against southern political economy where this state of impoverishment is thought to stem not only from the lack of theory but from the "deviance" of southern political economy from classical European and northern standards.

A response to the criticism of "theoretical impoverishment" can be formulated one of two ways: first by pointing out, as Schumpeter did, that political economy was not the only discipline to suffer this fate. Schumpeter argues that the lack of a theoretical dimension was not peculiar to political economy because the same thing also happened to the field of mathematics during that period. Secondly, while normally theoretical development comes after practical debates, in America practical debates on economic problems and policies rarely led to further

¹ C.F. Dunbar, "Economic Science in America, 1776-1876," *North American Review* 122 (January 1876), 134; T.E.C. Leslie, "Political Economy in the United States," *Fortnightly Review* 28, New Series, (October 1880), 488-509. Seligman clearly shows the practical nature of American economics, see E.R.A. Seligman, "Economics in the United States: An Historical Sketch," in his *Essays in Economics* (New York: Macmillan, 1925).

theoretical discussion because talented men could easily put their energies into practice in areas such as private enterprise where more economic opportunities and rewards were open.²

The supposed weakness of southern political economy is a function of a misinterpretation of how and why the norms, both classical and northern were appropriated, redefined and applied in ways that made sense in the context of the mid-nineteenth century South. Many studies use the development of political economy in Europe as the standard by which they measure the development of the discipline in the United States in general and the Old South in particular. Often they find specific economic statements made by southern economists false because the logic and reasoning does not correspond with that of classical political economy.

Early on southern political economists shared a similar view with their northern colleagues in refuting some schools of the European classical political economy and developing an American version of economics. But the dominating influence of slavery on the southern intellectual meant that a split between northern and southern economic thought was inevitable. By the 1830s, when the South advanced its own political and social ideologies, southern political economists faced a dilemma of conflicting commitments towards the science of economics or towards their society. This dilemma would not have posed a problem to southern political economists if southern society could have grown and developed on the liberal tradition of the bourgeois ideology. But as its political structure and economic relations matured, the Old South found itself more and more at odds with northern politics and ideas. Thereafter, as discussed perceptively by Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, the social relations of

² The great delusions among economists and historians of economic thought were the belief that the Ricardian school was of an abstract and impractical character. Edwin Cannan said of the 19th century economists that "practical aims were paramount...and the close connection between the economics and the politics of the Ricardian period...provides a key to many riddles, *History of the Theories of Production and Distribution in English Political Economy from 1796-1848*, 1903, 383-4, quoted in M. Dobb, *Theories of Value and Distribution Since Adam Smith: Ideology and Economic Theory* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 23; Joseph Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 514-26. Snavely argues against the accusation that the South did not produce good and able economists. He gives a long list of names and cites a number of books on economics written by southerners. The problem is that he does not go into the detail of those works, which varied and served different political purposes. Thus he puts De Bow in the same capacity as George Tucker and Thomas Cooper in the list of southern economists; see his *George Tucker As Political Economist* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), chapter 2.

southern slave society blocked the development of southern political economy.³ Gradually, southern political economists become more and more isolated not only from their northern counterparts but from the politics and ideas of the South as well. After the Compromise of 1850, which ignited the radical proslavery movement and signalled the eventual triumph of secessionists in the South, southern political economists found no place in the politics of secession. They could not use political economy to support or defend the rights of the South in breaking up the Union and the national economy. Finally southern intellectuals, particularly the proslavery theorists, in condemning the capitalist system and its liberal bourgeois ideology, attacked political economy as a false philosophy that led to the practice of "Free Love and no government," which was at war with not only the South, but Christianity and mankind. Southern proslavery theorists argued that based on the idea of selfishness, liberal political economy thus advocated social exploitation and anarchy in a social order.⁴ De Bow and a few southern political economists, however, tried to defend the proper role and good reputation of political economy in the social and economic development of the South. These efforts were in vain and finally were swept away in the storms of a radical proslavery movement that De Bow actively participated in.

In their attempts to justify their society, southern political economists relinquished liberal political economy and tried to advance a "practical" political economy in accord with the conditions of their region. In essence they adopted a new perspective vis-a-vis the key concepts of classical political economy, a perspective which was capable of explaining the existing master-slave relations and plantation economy. They even tried to offer their "new" world view and ideology as an alternative to the rise and expansion of the dehumanized system of capitalism.

³ Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Slavery, Economic Development, and the Law: The Dilemma of the Southern Political Economists, 1800-1860," in *Washington and Lee Law Review* 41 (Winter 1984), 1-29.

⁴ See for example the attack on classical political economy by George Fitzhugh in, "The False and the True Political Economy," *De Bow's Review* 30 (May & June 1861), 540-546. Such attacks on political economy could make more sense when viewed as the critique of capitalism. See the brilliant discussion of this topic by Eugene D. Genovese in *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York, Vintage Books, 1969), 165-194.

In the end this venture did not work mainly because southern political economists still relied on and borrowed their language and economic notions from bourgeois political economy. This process is best illustrated in De Bow's economic ideas. Paradoxical though his ideas may seem, they reflect the contradictory nature of southern society

Other studies explain southern economic ideas mainly from theoretical perspectives with little or no relation to the existing political and social realities.⁵ Searching for a systematic discourse on economic theory based on the classical model without looking at its relation to the existing ideology is doomed to failure from the beginning. Like any other social and political ideas and theories, economic thought and theory are conceived within the particular political and social relations of a state. In this sense, political economy was complex because it grew out of the existing common sense and non-economic ideas of a society. As Louis Dumont has pointed out, an economic viewpoint does not exist out there in society. Men construct it. The economic viewpoint, thus, does not tell us how it constructs its principles and the essence of economics. We have to find them in the "relation between economic thought and the global ideology."⁶ The "economic" question, therefore, must be treated as a "complex social reality" because it is both a "particular field" dealing with production, distribution and consumption, and, at the same time, a "particular aspect" of all non-economic activities.⁷ This problem is even more acute in the understanding of economic ideas in the Old South and the way southern political economists conceived the elements of political economy differently from northerners and the classical

⁵ See Ernest Teilhac, *Pioneers of American Economic Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1936); Joseph Dorfman, *The Economic Mind in American Civilization, 1606-1865* 3 vols. (New York: Viking Press, 1946); Henry W. Spiegel, *The Rise of American Economic Thought* (Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Company, 1960); Tipton R. Snavely, *George Tucker As Political Economist*; M. Leiman, *Jacob N. Cardozo: Economic Thought in the Antebellum South* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966); B.F. Kiker and Robert J. Carlsson eds., *South Carolina Economists: Essays on the Evolution of Antebellum Economic Thought* (Columbia, South Carolina: The Bureau of Business and Economic Research, 1969); Michael Hudson, *Economics and Technology in 19th Century American Thought: The Neglected American Economists* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1975); Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

⁶ Louis Dumont, *From Mandeville to Marx: The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 24.

⁷ Maurice Godelier, *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*, trans. Brian Pearce (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 23.

economists,⁸ because it was precisely at this period, when southern society had matured as a "slave society" with its "peculiar" world view, that political economy or economic science also emerged as a distinct social science discipline and occupied a central place, next to moral philosophy, in the discourse on social progress. The southern slave society was a "discrete social formation" crystallizing the "distinct social relations, political economy, and culture that constitutes a subsidiary society within the dominant mode of production."⁹ The slave South emerged during the expansion of the capitalist world market, but before the triumph of industrial capital and its free labor system. In this perspective, the South's social relations of production developed as "modern" relative to European feudalism, and as "retrogressive" relative to the emerging western capitalism.

This practice of studying economic thought without its social history has, unfortunately, become a standard practice since, by the last decade of the nineteenth century, the adjective "political" was dropped in favor of "pure or positive economics."¹⁰ With the claim of its scientifically determinable generalizations, economics and its practitioners cut themselves off from their history and proceeded deductively from a limited number of abstract postulates to formulate their theses, disregarding or manipulating factors not covered by the original postulates.¹¹

⁸ See the excellent and stimulating discussion of slavery and capitalism in Howard Temperley, "Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology," *Past and Present* 75 (May 1977), 94-118.

⁹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 57.

¹⁰ See Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 21-22; Donald N. Winch, "What Price the History of Economic Thought?," *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 9 (November 1962), 193-204. Both Schumpeter and Winch agree in the necessity of history to the full understanding of economic thought and theory. Mark Blaug, while supporting that idea of the importance of history in economic theory, insists that the history of economic thought "is nothing but the history of our efforts to understand the workings of an economy based on market transactions." Thus the objective of Blaug's history of economic thought is not society but only "market transactions." See his *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, Third Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6.

¹¹ Martin Staniland, *What Is Political Economy? A Study of Social Theory and Underdevelopment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 14.

Historians have interpreted southern economic ideas in different ways; one of them is why and how southerners reconciled their "capitalist" economic ideas with the proslavery ideology. James L. Huston asserts that there was a paradox between southern economic formulations and proslavery ideas. On the one hand, southerners believed in the philosophy of free trade with all its bourgeois theoretical assumptions, including individual liberty and property rights. On the other hand, southerners also deeply believed in the system of patriarchal slavery, the antithesis of the free labor system and the bourgeois ideology. To evade this paradox, Huston explains, southerners sought racial arguments to justify the use of slave labor and prove its compatibility with economic progress. But racial justification, Huston maintains, "never wholly resolved this dilemma in Southern economic thought," in particular the contradiction between the proslavery doctrines and the principles of free market economics.¹² The interesting point that Huston and other historians have recently made is that southern economic thought or political economy shared the same economic assumptions and rational as classical political economy and northern economic ideas except in the one area of slave and free labor.

In his fine book and thoughtful discussion of the development of political economy in antebellum America, Allen Kaufman contends that southern thinkers, including De Bow, still upheld free trade values while pursuing the cause of the South. Antebellum American economists, like the classical political economists, tried to reconcile their economic doctrines with the dominant political discourse of the time, says Kaufman. In the South, they continued the effort to reconcile slavery with modern republicanism. By focusing on individual thinkers, within a larger political context, Kaufman is able to see the process of capitalist development in early United States' history. He detects from early antebellum American economists' writings the traces of a prevailing influence of merchant capital, or in his words, "precapitalist relations," in both North and South prior to the 1840s. Emphasizing ideas of the unity of precapitalist and capitalist classes and the conflict of free and slave labor systems in America, Kaufman focuses his argument on the reconciliation of precapitalist and capitalist relations, that is, how the North and South accommodated their systems of labor with different presuppositions of modern

¹² James L. Huston, "The Panic of 1857, Southern Economic Thought, and the Patriarchal Defense of Slavery," *The Historian* 46:2 (1984), 165, 186.

republican political theory.¹³ Despite the differences in the systems of labor, both the North and the South believed they could accommodate their different systems of labor with modern republicanism.

Kaufman's decision to terminate his studies in 1848 and to juxtapose antebellum American economic ideas with the classical economists, deprives him of the opportunity to see clearly the emergence and growth of ideological conflicts between the North and South. Such conflicts were not merely a result of failed efforts to reconcile precapitalist and capitalist relations, but were actually due to the aggressive efforts on the part of both northern and southern political economists to define their visions of a correct and proper social order for the future progress of not only their region or country but the whole world.

Laurence Shore asserts that the South had incorporated classical political economy into its proslavery ideologies, making it the basis for a proslavery argument based on economic considerations. Early proslavery ideologists resorted to religious and political justifications for the existence of slavery before economics established itself as a "popular grammar" of the nation. By the 1830s, however, a new mode of argument based on economic reasons fully emerged and became as central to public debate on slavery as Protestantism and republicanism. But, as the case of De Bow will show, the adoption of classical political economy by southern political economists was more complicated than Shore's assertion.¹⁴

The birth of political economy in the United States, as in Europe, was a logical outcome of the growth and expansion of capitalism, albeit within different contexts and with different implications. American political economy was informed by the domination of merchant capital well into the nineteenth century when industrial capital began to exert its triumphant role in world economy. That merchant capital could still be able to exert its influential role was due chiefly to the rise to regional political power of the slaveholding class in the early national period, and to America's fortunate position in the development of western

¹³ Allen Kaufman, *Capitalism, Slavery, and Republican Values; American Political Economists, 1819-1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

¹⁴ Lawrence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 6-8.

capitalism,¹⁵ which allowed it to achieve rapid economic development without having industrialization and its attendant social conflicts. The American political experience, within the context of a shifting world economy as well as domestic conflicts, including the struggle between classes over the economic policies of the state, thus defined the nature and content of its political economy. Not only did Americans reap the benefits of expanding world capital, but the United States also benefited from the more developed science of political economy in Europe. Paul Conkin aptly puts it, "as latecomers, Americans inherited from European political economists their controlling issues, analytical concepts, challenging models, and even ritualized language." This does not mean, however, that they followed the same road as their European masters. Americans refuted one or another classical political economist. "But", as Conkin reiterates, "they could not ignore their predecessors, could not create their own universe of discourse."¹⁶

"Political economy" was a novel term in nineteenth-century America but the subject matter was not if we take the Physiocrats and Smith as the starting point of modern economic science. By the close of the colonial era, the American Revolutionaries had also acquainted themselves with the knowledge of political economy which was then flourishing in Europe. The term "political economy" was first used in Britain by Dugald Stewart, in 1800, when he titled his course, "Political Economy," at the University of Edinburgh. Next Thomas R. Malthus was appointed professor of history and political economy at the East India College near London in 1805 and the Political Economy Club was also founded in 1821. Sir Henry Drummond at Oxford in 1825 established the first chair of political economy in British universities. According to Drew McCoy, the American Revolutionaries conceived the term "political economy" as a signification of the existence of a close relationship between government and the proper social order, which, then, was classical republicanism. The central task of Jeffersonian republican political economy therefore was to reconcile classical

¹⁵ See Stuart Bruchey, *The Wealth of the Nation: An Economic History of the United States* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988)

¹⁶ Paul Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 17.

republicanism with modern social realities.¹⁷ According to Forrest MacDonald, the concept of political economy as ideas about the policies governments should or should not pursue regarding property relations to promote the general welfare of the people had emerged only after the American Revolution. While the word "politics" and "government" had specific meanings and usage in the antebellum South, the word "economy" had yet to receive the same treatment in its intellectual world. In general the word "economy" meant to live frugally. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the word "oeconomy" was used on three occasions in the debate (by Hamilton, Gerry, and Mason) to mean frugality. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, Americans still used the word "economy" in the old meaning of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which meant the management of a house or careful management and administration of a community.¹⁸

In America, economic topics might have been included in lectures presented at Columbia College in 1794. It is likely that these topics dealt mainly with the economics of agriculture and agronomy. Snavelly believes that "political economy" was first taught in the South at the College of William and Mary in the late eighteenth century. In any event, there is no doubt that by the first decade of the nineteenth century, a number of economic books by Smith, Ricardo, the Physiocrats, Montesquieu, Sir James Steuart, Locke, Hume, Kames, Dugald Stewart, Thomas Reid, Bentham, Malthus, and James Mill had made their way into various bookstores and private libraries.¹⁹ Americans acknowledged the encroachment of classical political economy with mixed feelings, especially on the negative impact of commerce and manufacturing.

In 1813, Thomas Cooper, while editing the *Emporium of Arts and Science* in Philadelphia, acknowledged the increasing impact of political economy in American politics and

¹⁷ R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 6-10.

¹⁸ Samuel Johnson defined economy as "household management, distribution of expense, frugality, disposition of things; Noah Webster in 1828 gave the same definition. See Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 97.

¹⁹ Snavelly, *George Tucker...*, 11-13; See also Michael J.L. O'Connor, *Origins of Academic Economics in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 20.

society. Sharing the same sentiments with the generation of the Founding Fathers, Cooper cautioned the reader of the mistaken ideas disseminating from political economy. Citing a book by Ganilh, Cooper opposed the idea that commerce and manufacturing are better than agriculture in augmenting the wealth of the nations. He also disagreed that the wealth from commerce and manufacturing would connect the poor and the rich and ameliorate the condition of the poor as to their rights, privileges, and enjoyments.²⁰ Another writer from Massachusetts wrote that "all wealth is derived from the natural production of the earth and labor, but [it is] labor alone that accumulates a surplus." Labor thus is entitled to the first place in regard to the production of wealth not commerce or manufacturing. Not all of the readers agreed with the editor about the corrupting influence of commerce, however. A Dr. E. Bollman wrote a long article to the magazine, explaining the true principles of political economy in general and the civilizing role of commerce in particular.²¹ By the end of the 1820s political economy found a secure place in the college lecture halls.

Some historians have asserted that De Bow was an advocate of a policy of economic development in a South that essentially was capitalistic.²² But I would argue that although De Bow embraced the bourgeois ideas and principles of classical political economy, this was more from frustration at the fact that the society and economy of the Old South on which the slaveholder's ideology was based, was conceived in, and shaped by, the rise and expansion of European capitalism. De Bow's economic ideas thus were contradictory, reflecting the paradoxes of the South as a slave society thriving in the world capitalist system and of merchant capital in the process of western capitalist development.²³

²⁰ Thomas Cooper, "Writer on Political Economy," *The Emporium of Arts and Science*, New Series, 1 (1813), 14; idem, "Political Arithmetic," 164-79.

²¹ "M" of Massachusetts, "Political Economy," *Emporium of Arts and Science* New Series, 2 (1813), 224; and Dr. E. Bollman, "Political Economy," 120.

²² Lawrence Shore, *Southern Capitalists: The Ideological Leadership of an Elite, 1832-1885* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986). See also James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982); idem, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1990).

²³ See a perceptive discussion on the debate over the nature of capitalism in America in Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 46 (January

De Bow studied political economy with Dr. William Brantley at the College of Charleston, using a text by Henry Vethake, *Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1838. Henry Vethake (1792-1866), a peripatetic professor, was then at the University of Pennsylvania. Characteristic of American clerical political economists at the time, he emphasized the moral value of political economy. As the science was still a novel subject and looked upon with much suspicion, Vethake made sure that his seniors and colleagues noticed in his treatise and lectures the religious character of political economy.²⁴ Written in response to labor unrest and the wide spread of democratic thinking particularly in the Northeast in the 1830s, Vethake's *Principles* surveyed cursorily the theoretical aspects of political economy before going into a discussion of practical problems of the day, ranging from wages and population, to finance and protective tariffs. He avoided all reference to writers whose views differed from his own. Paul Conkin thinks Vethake's text book was supremely boring but technically sophisticated. He was the first American economist who "domesticated" Ricardo.²⁵ He nevertheless attempted a few innovations in the extension of the definition of wealth and of capital to include immaterial or intellectual products, which Vethake himself called a "bold innovation", though he might have discovered precedent for it among classical writers.²⁶ In his section on practical issues, he devoted the most attention to banking problems, then foreign trade, followed by population and labor problems. Vethake believed that these problems were the consequence of interference "with the natural order of things."²⁷ Although in sympathy

1989), 120-44. Kulikoff rightly observes that social historians in this debate generally ignore arguments about the creation of a peculiar slave society in the Old South advanced by Eugene D. Genovese (see particularly Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

²⁴ Joseph Dorfman and Rexford Guy Tugwell, "Henry Vethake: A Chapter in the Development of the Higher Learning in the United States," *Columbia University Quarterly* 25 (December 1933), 346. See also Michael J.L. O'Connor, *Origins of Academic Economics in the United States*, 190-204.

²⁵ Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 123-134.

²⁶ "Henry Vethake," in Palgrave's *Dictionary of Political Economy*, ed. Henry Higgs, Vol. III (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1963), 620.

²⁷ Henry Vethake, *Principles of Political Economy* (Philadelphia: P.H. Nicklin & T. Johnson, 1838), 298-303.

with the poor, he was critical of the labor movement and trade unionism for he believed that the interests of all classes were not in conflict. The cause of economic problems was not physical but moral, according to Vethake. Thus he emphasized the importance of the diffusion "of education, of morals, and of religion." The issue of slavery was not a problem in Vethake's thinking since he understood the slave as another form of wage-laborer, that is, "the price of the slave was a payment in part for what his labor was expected to produce; his maintenance constituting the remaining part of that payment."²⁸ It was not surprising then that Vethake and his treatise were highly regarded by southern intellectuals and De Bow recommended in the *Review* that the text, though not perfect, was a basic reading for everyone who was interested in political economy.

Henry Vethake thus established a notable Christian perspective in economics. He was a very orthodox Ricardian and was prominent among those Americans who sought a "direct and obvious connection between the teachings of political economists and those of Jesus Christ." He helped to perfect, then, that part of the conventional wisdom which instructed men to submit, whatever the human cost, not merely to circumstantial fate, but to divine purpose.²⁹

Although De Bow never constructed an abstract theory in his own political economy, he did have some familiarity with its theories, which provided him the necessary tools for analyzing the South's economic problems. He always decried theoretical political economy as useless and full of controversy irrelevant to practical use and the improvement of daily life. It is difficult to say then how sophisticated was his understanding of classical political economy because he never seriously dealt with any of the famous political economists. But it is evident from the reading list for the course in "Public Economy, Commerce and Statistics," which De Bow had prepared to teach at the University of Louisiana,³⁰ that he had quite a substantial

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹ Gary W. Hull, "The Prospect for Man in Early American Economic Thought" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, 1968), 174.

³⁰ De Bow was the first to hold a chair of Professor of "Commerce, Public Economy and Statistics" at the University of Louisiana from 1849-1855. But he gave only the first introductory lecture of the course when Cholera struck New Orleans, interrupted the lectures, and broke up the class. Unfortunately the first chair of Political Economy at the University of Louisiana never materialized in the antebellum period. The problem later on was with the administration which was more concerned with other subjects and also the endowment for the chair was not immediately available to the benefit of the university.

knowledge of the subject together with its noted masters. He specified the following text-books for his course: Locke's *Essays on Government*; Lieber's *Political Ethics and Hermeneutics*; Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*; Smith's *Wealth of Nations*; McCulloch's *Commercial and Geographical Dictionary*; Say's *Political Economy*; Vethake's *Political Economy*; Carey's *Wealth*; Stephen's *Progress of Discovery and Maritime Commerce*; Heeren's *Commercial Researches*; Vincent's *Commerce of the Ancients*; McGregor's *Commercial Legislation*; Annual Reports American and Contemporary Governments. De Bow also suggested a long list of books for the library, in addition to all the standard periodicals and the most select journals relative to commerce, agriculture and manufactures. Some of the familiar economists were Stewart, Lauderdale, Ricardo, Malthus, Torrens, Cooper, Cardozo, Whateley, Senior, Hume, Bailey, Jones, de Tracy, Garnier, Ganilh, Sismondi, Blanqui, Rau, and Mill, to mention only a few authorities from his very long recommended reading list.³¹ From his frequent references in articles and from his commonplace book, it is safe to say that the most familiar, and thus influential, economists on De Bow's economic mind were Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus, J.B.Say, David Hume, McCulloch, Robertson, and Henry Vethake. De Bow published only one brief theoretical exposition of political economy in the *Review*, which was a synopsis of Vethake's *Principles of Political Economy*. His "Notes on Political Economy"³² was neither a brilliant nor original writing on economics. In fact, it was the notes he had copied down from Vethake's book during his college days, published without any revision. Most of his economic discussions that appeared in the *Review* and in speeches were without theoretical pretension.

De Bow suggested that "political economy" should be properly called "public economy" in order to distinguish it from "politics" which had gained a degenerate notion of

Apparently De Bow never really taught Political Economy in the university, though he had often been referred to by the public as professor. This was because he had given many speeches and addresses to various meetings and conventions on the subject of agriculture, commerce and manufacturing in the South in addition to his well-known and much respected erudition in the *Review*.

³¹ De Bow, *The Industrial Resources*, Vol. I, 332-34. See Appendix.

³² "Notes on Political Economy," *De Bow's Review* 19 (October 1855), 416-437.

being corrupt and biased in favor of particular individuals or groups. By designating it "public economy" instead of "political economy," he may have intended to elevate the subject in accordance with its lofty goal, which was the promotion of the public good. He recommended that political discussions should be avoided in the subject because of their relation to political controversies and party biases, which tended to confuse and divide people. De Bow wanted to emphasize the positive principles of political economy, which were to serve the interests of the people and improve the moral condition of society, in contrast to politics, which functioned mainly for the benefit of politicians and the state. His economic thought therefore reflected the southern world view that subordinated the individual to the community, while his economic language, both in the style and context, showed the dominating influence of moral philosophy and religious thought of the time.

It is interesting to compare De Bow's definition of political economy with Marx's since they represent opposite schools of economic ideas and perceptions of social relations. Yet both shared the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment and witnessed the rise of the capitalist world economy. Paradoxically, as noted by Howard Temperley, the Marxists and southern proslavery intellectuals were equally good critics of the emerging capitalist society, but with opposite implications. For Marx, his critique of classical political economy is based on the critique of private property and its attendant social relations of production. The terms "political or public economy" had no meaning, according to Marx, as long as private property existed, because the people would never actually gain according to its premises. "One either dismisses this term completely, or one accepts such premises as give it meaning," wrote Marx. He then suggested that in the present circumstances political economy "ought to be called *private* economy, for its public connections exist only for the sake of private property."³³

George Tucker, in his review of Thomas Cooper's *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, described political economy as one of the "most useful subjects of speculation which treats of the production and distribution of the materials of human subsistence and comfort."³⁴ The point that he emphasized, as did most of the American political

³³ Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, edited with an introduction by Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1973), 201. Original emphasis; Howard Temperley, "Capitalism, Slavery and Ideology," 115.

³⁴ George Tucker, "Political Economy," *American Quarterly Review* 1 (June 1827), 310.

economists, was the separation of the science of political economy from that of government. It is likely that this idea was influenced by Jean-Baptiste Say, whose *Treatise on Political Economy* was then one of the two most popular books on the subject in the United States. Say said that since the times of Adam Smith, the two distinct inquiries of political economy and government had been uniformly separated. Political economy was confined to the science which "treats of wealth while politics of the relations existing between a government and its people and among states."³⁵ Accordingly Say denounced the way people confounded the science of politics, which was strictly limited to the "investigation of the principles which lay the foundation of the social order," with political economy," which unfolds the manner in which wealth is produced, distributed, and consumed." To him, wealth was essentially independent of political organization. Forms of government were not responsible for the production of wealth. But people incorrectly assumed that good government meant having the principles on which the growth of wealth depends. Say imputed this confusion to the two famous philosophers, Dugald Stewart and J.J. Rousseau.³⁶

De Bow, however, had different opinions on the separation of political economy from government. For De Bow, political economy and government were closely related because the aim of political economy was "to direct the action and control the excesses of the [government], in all those points in which the public wealth is involved." The public wealth is an essential element of that public welfare, with which all governments are charged. It is everything that relates to the physical well-being of a people.³⁷ The central concern of political economy, according to De Bow, was how to use "public wealth" for the "physical well-being of a people," which was a basis of all social and moral progress and ultimately of the advancement of science and civilization. In the relation between political economy and government, De Bow followed closely the ideas of Dugald Stewart, who remarked that political economy aided in the

³⁵ Say's opinion of this issue was in his "introduction" which was translated and restored in the American edition. The other 'popular' book on political economy, according to the American Editor, was Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. See J.B. Say, *A Treatise on Political Economy*, tr. by C.R. Prinsep, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1859, c1834), xv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ix-xv.

³⁷ "Political Economy, Government, etc.," *The Industrial Resources*, Vol. II, 386.

improvement of society "not by delineating plans of new constitutions, but by enlightening the policy of actual legislators." Instead of separating political economy from government, De Bow insisted that political economy must serve as a guide to legislators and statesmen in effecting the correct government policy.

De Bow said political economy, as related to the governing of society, provided the foundation for the improvement of the physical condition of mankind. Therefore the subjects of political economy included the constitution of government, the laws, the judicial, social and economic institutions, schools, religion, morals, soil, geographical position, climate, arts, indeed all the "circumstances in the character and condition of a people so far as they had an effect upon the public wealth," such as the "production, distribution and consumption of commodities." Accordingly, De Bow thought political economy was "a science of lofty and liberal character, not identified with that of politics, but very nearly allied to it, and indeed one of its branches."³⁸ In practice, De Bow's political economy, which was closer to a "science of morals," would gradually give way to politics and finally become literally "one of its branches."

If we follow De Bow's ideas of the origin of society and government, we may place political economy in the realm of society, as it originated from human nature and was designed to improve the welfare of the people. Political economy, according to De Bow, belonged to the people, in his word, "subjects," and must serve the public not the state, even though government was designated to be the ultimate administrator of its principles. He therefore advocated strongly that good governments must hold principles of political economy so that they could promote the public wealth and individual happiness. The ruler must realize that "his own state and splendor is in some degree dependent upon the extent and prosperity of his realm and his subjects."³⁹

The success of political economy, De Bow asserted from the American political experience, was demonstrated in the sound laws and legislation of the government. Political democracy or Calhoun's theory of "political organism," which places the government under the control of the community, convinced De Bow of the possibility of limiting government rule and

³⁸ "The Commercial Age," 232-3.

³⁹ "Political economy, Government, etc.," 386.

power and of forcing it to act as political agency for the implementation of the principles of political economy.

In general, De Bow thought political economy dealt with the general causes affecting the productive faculties and means of a nation. By the "productive faculties and means," he meant the capacities and resources of a nation in producing things that have an exchange value, that is, commodities. For De Bow, political economy was closely related to the rise of commerce in modern Europe, particularly in the Italian republics of Venice, Genoa and Pisa from the tenth century onward. He asserted that the Italians were the first who collected and combined the principles of political economy. Among the fathers of this science were Gassendi⁴⁰ and Sismondi⁴¹ and later the French economists,⁴² who contributed essays on the subject of trade. It was the famous Adam Smith, however, who was the first philosopher who "systematized and treated political economy as a whole," and taught it to speak in the "language of the gentleman." De Bow praised Smith for bringing "consistency out of chaos" and "though in regard to many important particulars he may have been led into error," yet on the whole the value of his researches and "deductions" could never be too highly appreciated. But, although De Bow acknowledged his great intellectual debt to Smith, he did not always do justice to Smith's economic theory, slighting and reducing many of Smith's economic principles into simple and "practical" discourse.

Although he disagreed with Quesney on the basic premise that agriculture was the source of all wealth, De Bow was still fond of the Physiocrats' analysis.⁴³ For him, the

⁴⁰ According to Schumpeter, "Pierre Gassendi(1592-1655) was a philosopher, mathematician, and physicist, a professor in holy orders whom, on his actual work, nobody would think of excluding from the scholastic circle. But he went out of his way to distance himself from it;" see Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 89. It is interesting to note that Gassendi was famous, not on economic writing, but of his anti-scholastic and anti-Aristotelian scholastics and his advocacy of empiricist or inductive methods. His attraction to De Bow might have come from Gassendi's philosophical methods rather than from the principles of political economy.

⁴¹ Note that J.C.L. Sismondi (1773-1842) is not Gassendi's contemporary.

⁴² De Bow did not specifically mention the names of the French economists here, but elsewhere he referred to Quesney and the Physiocrats on the development of political economy. On the issue of free trade, it is likely that he might refer to F. Bastiat.

⁴³ *De Bow's Review* 19 (October 1855), 428.

"agricultural system" of Quesnay was now regarded as "entirely exploded." De Bow disagreed with Quesnay's opinion that agriculture was the source of wealth and the farmers were the only real producers of wealth. He admitted that agriculture, being prior in time to the other arts and pursuits, such as, manufactures and commerce, was the mother of them all. But in a departure from Jeffersonian agrarianism, he stated that agriculture was not the only source of wealth because it was not the only productive branch of the economy operating through the "powers of nature." In all branches of production, he said, the powers of nature cooperate, for example steam in commerce and manufactures. Agricultural production derived in part from nature and in part from human labor.⁴⁴ Agriculture was said to yield rent, so did commerce and manufactures, said De Bow. But rent was not a criterion of profit, De Bow contended, "for if all the land was made of the same quality there would be no rent, so agriculture will yield no rent when it is more profitable."⁴⁵

Although he regarded the "three great arts and pursuits" of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce productive and necessary for the increase of the wealth of nations, De Bow believed commerce was the most "productive" because it was a process "applying to all the changes and operations performed upon commodities, after the point of their complete production and until that of their consumption." Commerce therefore is a means by which "the products of the farmer or manufacturer are transported from the places of their production and distributed among the individuals by whom they are destined to be consumed."⁴⁶ De Bow believed that the exchange of commodities gave value to agriculture or products of land, not simply land itself. While the Physiocrats taught that the farmers, of all men, deserved the special favor of government (an exemption from taxation was naturally one of these favors), De Bow

⁴⁴ In Smith's words, "...in agriculture nature labors along with man." *Wealth of Nations*, E. Cannan (ed.), Vol. I, 343, quoted in Overton H. Taylor, *A History of Economic Thought* (New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), 27.

⁴⁵ Notes on Political Economy, "De Bow's Review 19 (October 1855), 428.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 428.

felt that the splendid fallacy of the French school had made "the farmers the pet children of legislation."⁴⁷

Like his colleagues in America, De Bow thought Ricardo's doctrine of rent was inapplicable in this country because there was no distinct class supported by wages, and a growth of population here caused increasing returns and lower prices. Ricardo, adopting Malthus's ideas that the scarcity of land and pressure of population growth necessarily diminishes the returns from added inputs of labor and capital in agriculture, defines rent as the portion of farm production paid to a landlord for use of the "original and indestructible powers of the soil." De Bow does not think that the qualities of the soil are "original and indestructible." Like other production pursuits, agricultural lands are products of labor. Ricardo's economic theory depicts class conflicts among the landlord, capitalist and wage-laborer.⁴⁸ De Bow's economic theory, however, contends that basically there was no conflict of interests among classes in the South because society is so organized that one branch of production always aids others, and no one group or class of people can prosper and enjoy all the wealth alone while other classes of people are left in poverty.

Another classical political economist whose theory received the most discussions by southern political economists as well as proslavery theorists, was Thomas R. Malthus. Generally, southern political economists rejected Malthusian theory of population chiefly because they believed the vast amount of land in the United States together with the progress in science and technology would increase production of food to meet the increased numbers of population. With their optimistic attitudes toward social progress, American political economists could not agree with Malthus's pessimistic vision of the pressure of population. They believed population growth was desirable because it was the source of progress and the potential for producing wealth of the nations. Some southern economists thought labor was the source of all capital, the increase of population, therefore, constituted the increase of capital and of productive power. Another important element of American economic thought that contradicted Malthus's

⁴⁷ "Political Economy, Government, etc.," 389. The Physiocrats, however, did not want to tax anyone but the landowners. See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976).

⁴⁸ J. R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics* (New York: New York University Press, 1921), 197-99; Paul Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity*, 32-3.

population theory was its theological dimension. American economists believed that procreation is governed by divine laws. It is God's will for man to replenish the earth. Since Providence creates positive forces, He also creates the negative forces, therefore, the numbers of population will be harmoniously adjusted to the available resources of the earth. Divine relationships, exemplified through social laws, also necessitate the division of labor and exchanges to meet the rising demand of the population.⁴⁹ The influence of Malthusian doctrines, nevertheless, can be seen in the writings of southern political economists who recognized the important relations between population growth and the means of subsistence and the progress or decline of society, in particular, the relationship between the birth rate and the death rate, the increased population density and poverty, the maldistribution of population over the earth, a faulty distribution of wealth, and problems caused by immigration.⁵⁰

Joseph Spengler writes that De Bow was a Malthusian for he gave much attention to population problems. De Bow wrote that population growth in "old countries" should be restrained for total wealth and prosperity do not increase in proportion to numbers. Scarcity of land increases the price of agricultural produce while the increase of population tends to lower wages, which depend upon the ratio of population to capital. Wages can be increased only if the standard of living is raised and marriage is deferred so that a more favorable ratio between population and capital is established. Otherwise "national decline" tends to ensue if population "does not exist in just proportion to the means of support" of a country. Note that in recommending the means to raise wages, De Bow relied on the inculcation of habits of prudence and frugality and of education so that one could learn to improve one's skills.⁵¹

Concerned mainly with the creation of wealth and social progress, De Bow warned that the mere numbers of population did not mean the country was wealthy and on its way to progress and civilization. He pointed to nations with large populations like Russia, India, and China, which he hardly thought were in the same scale of civilization as the United States, as his

⁴⁹ J. R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory in Early American Economics*, 195.

⁵⁰ See Joseph J. Spengler, "Population Theory in the Ante-Bellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 2 (August 1936), 360-377; idem, "Malthusianism and the Debate on Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 34 (April 1935), 179-89; J. R. Turner, *The Ricardian Rent Theory*, 197.

⁵¹ Spengler, "Population Theory," 373-4.

examples. The true meaning of wealth, power and resources of a nation lay in the "value of the productive industry of a country" by which one measured "its prosperity, its advance in civilization and its means of defence and security."⁵² For De Bow, the importance of population theory was in its concern for the happiness of the people, and that, he felt, could be realized only in a society where there was public virtue and a government with the political principles of republicanism. In his letters to the Census Board, he commented that the number and wealth of a people, i.e., ages, races, color, education and etc., were not enough to "determine with accuracy, their degree of physical and moral elevation or comfort." He suggested the census should have a complete record of the number of births, marriages and deaths, with the proportion of births to marriages, the ages at marriage and the average offspring; the causes of death, or, at least, the leading ones. This kind of detailed information, De Bow argued, was necessary in any calculation relating to the advancement and ultimate destiny of a nation.⁵³

But the important point in De Bow's population theory is how he applied the Malthusian theory to the Old South. He did not agree with Malthus, but utilized the theory to defend slavery and white supremacy. Indeed, he appropriated Malthusian population theory to support the extreme proslavery argument. De Bow wrote that, in the early 1850s, the prevailing opinion in the South was that, in the near future, the Negro race would become too populous to be advantageously employed as slaves and the institutions would languish. More importantly, the increase of population in the Negro race would increase the racial conflict between blacks and whites to a degree that might be impossible to contain. De Bow, however, thought this apprehension was groundless. He answered that there would be no racial conflicts between the black and white races because the Negro population would never increase more rapidly than the white population. He cited the evidence from the census, which shows that in the first period, from 1790 down to 1840, the Negro and white races increased at the same rate of 3 per cent per annum, but in the next decade, from 1840-1850, the white race increased 34 per cent while the Negro race increased only 26 per cent. Thus an advantage of 8 per cent in favor of the whites.

⁵² "Population, Capital, and Production," by Hamilton, *De Bow's Review* 19(August 1855), 132.

⁵³ "The Census of 1850," *De Bow's Review* 8 (March 1850), 291.

De Bow said there were "preventives to propagation, or checks to population growth," such as still births and infant mortality. From data based on the Charleston 1848 census, he argued that although there were comparatively more births in the Negro than in the white race, the Negro mortality rate was higher during the period of birth to maturity, and also during adolescence, which was the optimal age for procreation. From this evidence, De Bow contended that, the Negroes were propagating less than whites, and that "a contest of races," which people thought would "spring up as southern population increased" could be set aside by facts and principles. "It is doubtful that there will be another acre added to the slave territory, it is questionable whether there is any need of more," De Bow concluded, "but, be these as they may, it is clear the *destiny* of the slave states is in the hands of the *white race* of these states."⁵⁴

De Bow was also not worried about the rapid population growth in the United States. He said, "no population can increase without a corresponding increase in the production of agriculture." He believed the instinct of man to multiply his species is "a constant quantity," differing essentially from the capacity of acquiring subsistence, which is a "variable quantity." Since "subsistence is the parent of future, and the support of present population," therefore, "an increase of the means of subsistence is the only sure criterion of a permanent and beneficial increase of population."⁵⁵ De Bow optimistically believed that the slave states, within one hundred years, could increase their agricultural produce sufficiently to support such a population comfortably.

In his reflection upon classical political economy, De Bow thought there were many questions in political economy remaining to be answered, for example, wages, rent, the poor laws, sources of value, division of labor, as well as the definition of wealth, productive labor, the nature and measures of value, the principles of demand and supply and taxation.

Like other sciences of the nineteenth century, political economy also had its own laws, which were collected, arranged, and deducted from facts. Following Vethake's treatise, De Bow stated that the province of political economy was "to determine the laws which regulate the production, distribution and consumption of *wealth*; to ascertain the course to be pursued or

⁵⁴ "Southern Population--Its Destiny," *De Bow's Review* 13 (July 1852), 18. Original emphases.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

avoided by governments and individuals in the disposal of the wealth under their control, and promote in as great a degree as possible the happiness of mankind."⁵⁶ For De Bow, the laws of political economy are "natural," as they have been empirically proved to be correct and undisputed. In De Bow's economic ideas, the distribution of wealth and the problems of rent and wages, which were central to Ricardian economic theory, were not economic problems in the plantation South because private wealth was not the economic goal of any class in the South.⁵⁷

De Bow defined wealth as "utility existing to a limit[ed] extent and capable of appropriation." The mere possession of utility, however, does not constitute wealth; that is, whatever is useful is not necessarily a portion of wealth; it must have exchange value which gives it a certain quality. The exchange value of a commodity is expressed in its having utility, the capacity of appropriation, and limited quantity.⁵⁸ Hence wealth is utility capable of consumption. Since utility exists in any objects which can satisfy man's actual wants and desires, De Bow thought a poor man who possesses only a six-pence also possesses wealth. At times, he limited wealth to privately owned commodities, especially the most visible and profitable commodities, that is, cotton, tobacco, rice, and other products of human labor. Like Cardozo, he did not limit wealth to things bought and sold, but extended it to mean the productive capacity of a nation. From this he reasoned that the wealth of a community or nation meant all the wealth possessed by its members.

De Bow's application of the concept of wealth reflected his commitment to the preservation of the social order of the South. He wrote that it was clear that the slaveholding class possessed almost all the wealth of the South. They had to because it was their duty and for the preservation of peace and order of the society. But they must have the correct notions of wealth and social responsibilities. For them, the preservation of their wealth was the highest

⁵⁶ "Notes on Political Economy," 416-7. This passage, and the rest of the note, is copied from Vethake's *Principles of Political Economy*, 16 and passim.

⁵⁷ James Oakes asserts that the slaveholders of the Old South were capitalists in pursuing their private wealth through the "rationalization" of the slave labor. But how could the planters conceive this idea and put into practice when "rationalization" of the labor is a new concept which is conceivable only in the modern factory system of the twentieth century. See his, *Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 139-74.

⁵⁸ Vethake, *Principles of Political Economy*, 22.

consideration. But they needed to know that wealth may be divided into two classes, natural and artificial. "The natural wealth of a country consists of the soil, forests, minerals, streams, etc. Artificial wealth is that permanent accumulation of the products of human labor and skill which remains after the immediate and daily wants of the producer are supplied." Therefore, De Bow contended, the true test of prosperity must be seen only in the capacity of a community to "produce the means of human comfort." In his opinion, labor, skill, and capacity for producing commodities "do not constitute wealth in this sense of the term." They were merely the means of its acquisition. A country might have a great productive capacity and employ much labor, and still an individual and a state might not increase in wealth.

De Bow supported his argument with the example of the existing economic condition of the South Atlantic states. He said the Southern states were poorer than they were twenty years ago, even though there was a small increase in the number of laborers and skilled professions. But the great source of all wealth in an agricultural country--the soil--had been greatly deteriorated and diminished. He firmly stated that no country, especially an agricultural one, could increase in wealth while the soil was becoming more and more exhausted every year. Sooner or later the absolute state of exhaustion would come and "no wealth that could be acquired by the sale of those products, the growth of which had caused this state of things, could compensate for the loss of the soil." To preserve the wealth and the slave South, De Bow thus advocated that the slaveholding class diversify their land and wealth into manufacturing and commerce rather than concentrating them in the decaying agricultural practices of a single crop system. Specifically, De Bow advised them to diversify slave labor, in order to create the conditions for the growth of manufactures and provide employment and more economic opportunities for the nonslaveholders. With the correct notions of wealth and economic policies, the South would be able to produce and increase the real wealth, that is, the "means of human comfort."⁵⁹

Another writer for *De Bow's Review* emphasized the meaning of "national wealth," which people tended to think of as the aggregated wealth of a nation, divorced from a community's and individual's well-being. The important aspect of national wealth, the author said, lay in its distribution to the benefit and happiness of the whole society both the rich and

⁵⁹ "Manufactures in the South and West," *The Industrial Resources*, Vol. II, 107-121.

poor. "Without such a result," an article in *De Bow's Review* stated, "however rich, no *nation* can be happy, as a *people*; for, without such a result, though the nation may be rich in the aggregate, the great masses of the people may suffer all the wretchedness of penury and want."⁶⁰ The writer gave an example of Great Britain; though the country was rich, the British people--"the masses"--were miserably poor. For southerners wealth without social responsibility was not desirable. Another writer warned that the possession of wealth was not a blessing, for the desire to be rich exposed men to greater temptation and "the love of money is the root of all evil." The writer even pronounced that the commerce of a nation had laid not the foundation of its prosperity, not the road to wealth, but the road to corruption.⁶¹

Here again the slaveholder's critique of capitalist wealth is analogous to Marx's contemptuous criticisms of bourgeois property. To Marx, the term "national wealth" had only arisen as a result of the liberal economists' passion for generalization. Similarly, Marx insisted that although the "national wealth" of the English was very great, the people were still the poorest under the sun. Thus this term had no meaning as long as private property continued to exist.⁶² The difference is that while Marx based his criticisms of classical political economy on bourgeois private property, southerners had no problem with private property as such, but rather with the related individualistic ideas and practices that sapped the reciprocal structure of and dependent relations within the hierarchical society.

Basically, De Bow accepted the premises of wealth according to those of classical political economy. In this manner De Bow regarded the commodity as the elementary form of wealth and emphasized the moral character and social role of commerce as seen in his economic ideas on the nature and impact of wealth and prosperity. For northerners, however, there were different popular notions regarding the social meaning of wealth. The Westward movement that followed the Revolution opened new lands and created a new ethos for Americans. The self-

⁶⁰ Charles T. James, "Cotton and Cotton Manufactures at the South," *De Bow's Review* 7 (August 1849), 173. Emphasis in the original.

⁶¹ "The Commercial Spirit--Carthage," *De Bow's Review* 28 (January 1860), 66-67. The debate over the debased nature of commerce had been originated since the colonial period, reflecting the tension between the self and society, see J.E. Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

⁶² Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 201.

seeking individual in pursuit of gain was more closely related to the ideal of freemen engaged in "pursuit of happiness."⁶³ Alexis de Tocqueville also noted in 1835 that Americans came to see the new uses of wealth that no longer were associated with the traditional possession of property or trade and the moral considerations. Riches could be transferred from one enterprise to another based largely on one's shrewd management rather than on family relations. Land, like other forms of property, had no special prestige, except that it was another commodity. But southerners in some respects, as Bertram Wyatt-Brown writes, moved more slowly to the new meaning of wealth, as stated by de Tocqueville, than other Americans.⁶⁴ Southerners were not apprehensive of wealth itself, but of the concentration of wealth. The wealthy planters who did not diversify their wealth and capital into industrial and commercial pursuits were still regarded as friendly neighbors in the community. The people in the community, as Thornton shows in his book, might not love the planters but they had no reasons to be afraid of and to regard them as enemies.⁶⁵

De Bow also saw another form of wealth represented in money as he explained the origin of money in his article, "Coins, Weights, and Measures."⁶⁶ He said that the money of a country "represented its wealth, and the system of weights and measures applied to the division of that wealth." To show the complexity of the term, he ventured back into the origin of society when man was a producer, manufacturer of every article of consumption for himself. In the pre-society stage, man had no idea of distribution and exchange of his produce since there was no need for doing so. With few wants, man could easily satisfy the needs in his independent existence. But "natural inequalities" broke up the unities and independent existence of men and amalgamated them in a society in which men were "reciprocally employed in each other's service." Slowly society and civilization arrived at the origin of barter, which had limited use

⁶³ Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 311-12.

⁶⁴ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 73.

⁶⁵ J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society, Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 115-116.

⁶⁶ "Coins, Weights, and Measures," *De Bow's Review* 2 (November 1846), 284-303.

because it could not satisfy all the wants of the producers. Limited by a variety of goods, participating parties might be disappointed at being unable to acquire things that they desired. In order to facilitate the process of exchange to fulfill men's wants, it was necessary for men to find something to serve as an equivalent for their goods and to be used as a medium of exchange. That equivalent should be "something desired and not possessed, or not possessed in sufficient quantities by those with whom [they] would barter."⁶⁷

Here De Bow comes to the same path that the classical political economists had traveled before. He wrote that in the process of barter, eventually a "commodity of universal requisition and demand must be sought to conduct the exchanges, which have become too complicated to be conducted *in kind*." This common commodity would let men meet each other at all times upon common ground and enjoy their mutual products. Such a commodity should be scarce and generally esteemed. De Bow gave examples of the Mexicans, the early Greeks, the Carthaginians, the Lacedemonians, the Abyssinians, who used various kinds of commodities as a medium of exchange. Colonial Virginia and Carolina adopted tobacco and rice while the Western states even chose pork or horses. In each of these cases, De Bow asserted, "the *commodity* so dignified as the medium of conducting the exchanges of all others, became in every sense the *money* of the country, without having lost anything of its character as merchandise."⁶⁸ Finally gold and silver became the most popular medium of exchange because of their unique properties. Thus the precious metals came to be both money and wealth itself.

The next key concept in classical political economy is labor. De Bow defined labor as "disagreeable exertion of body or mind with the prospect of compensation." In this light it did not matter what social form men take to labor; servant, independent farmer, planter, or slave, are all the same as long as they receive compensation for their labor. For De Bow labor, including slave labor, was not wealth, but only a means to procure wealth. The same reason also applied to capital which is only a means to acquire wealth. Southern political economists gradually came to the same political standpoint, that is, to support and accept the legitimate and proper form of

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 286. Original emphases.

slave labor for the South, which, according to classical political economy, was deemed unsuitable for modern society and economy. De Bow, therefore, had no problem at all with the specifics of labor relations. He believed that there was and had been only one general form of social relations, that is, the master-slave relation, though it appeared under different names such as the relations between lord-servant in Medieval period and capitalist-free laborer in modern times. Underlying this variety of forms was the same reciprocal relationship between the one who labors and the other who provides protection and care for the laborer.

Southerners believed that there were two "forms of labor" which had been known and used in all ages--"hired men and bondsmen" or, in modern terms, free laborers and slaves. These two "classes" had always existed, among "all nations, under every form of civil government." They were essentially the same, said William Grayson, because basically they performed the same indispensable functions in a society or country, "those of hewers of wood and drawers of water." Labor takes one or the other of these forms, according to circumstances of climate, productions and race, but the evils and advantages of their conditions were similar.⁶⁹

Southern political economists, in their attempts to grapple with the principles of classical political economy, had encountered many theories and concepts with which they could hardly agree because they were based on assumptions that never occurred in their own society and economy. George Tucker stated that there were two controversies in political economy that had yet to be satisfactorily resolved as far as he knew. One was on the question of value theory, specifically the measure of value; the other the origin of rent.⁷⁰ The controversy of value theory was as old as the origin of simple commodity production and exchange, and it was one area in political economy in which southern economists strongly disagreed with their classical predecessors. Consequently they either substituted another version of value theory or totally disregarded the classical one.

In Antiquity Aristotle had first noticed the peculiar character of a commodity in having a twofold aspect, use-value and exchange-value. He said that everything which we possess had two uses; one "the proper" and the other "the improper or secondary." The proper

⁶⁹ William J. Grayson, "The Dual Form of Labor," *De Bow's Review* 28 (January 1860), 49.

⁷⁰ George Tucker, "Political Economy," *American Quarterly Review* I (1827), 312.

use is to appropriate or consume the thing as it is made while the improper use is to barter it instead of using it.⁷¹ The former was to be known as "use-value" and the latter "exchange-value." This observation also indicates a trace of moral judgment in commodity production and exchange. Indeed it sets the stage for later controversies over the criteria of value and how one reconciles the "paradox of value," that is, the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value as best seen in the two commodities, water and diamond. The first has more useful value to human but less exchange-value while the latter is less useful in life but has more exchange-value. The complexity of value theory became more pronounced when theorists subscribed to the idea of the centrality of labor in producing commodities. Underlying the idea of work or labor were social and religious beliefs that carried the weight of moral judgment according to one's perception of a proper social order. In the Christian tradition, at least from the 13th century onwards, physical labor was regarded as favorable to religious virtue and as a means of keeping men from sinning. The emphasis upon the remuneration of some socially useful activity thus gave rise to the notion of a moral right to the product of one's labor. This early version of a labor theory of value, Schumpeter commented, was in error in that it explained the phenomenon of value by the fact that most commodities cost labor. Schumpeter emphasized that there is no logical relation between the necessity, moral or economic, of remunerating labor and what is known as the labor theory of value.⁷²

In America, Calvinism also raised the idea of work as a religious duty in itself. Work became an expression of Grace and an end in itself as a means to salvation. The Old South, which carried, in its own ways, some of the Puritan work ethic, also valued highly the toil and labor of men in refining and improving their lives and the community. Genovese writes that the slaveholders did not simply spend their lives in leisure; they worked hard in their fashion and carried heavy responsibilities. But neither were they Puritan-like in all aspects of the work ethic, such as the "bourgeois respect for time," and attention to duty and devotion to the calling of business. Slaveholders saw money as a means to a particular kind of good life, not as an end in

⁷¹ Aristotle, *De Republica*, (1837), quoted in K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, edited with an introduction by M. Dobb (New York: International Publishers, 1981), 27.

⁷² Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis*, 92.

itself.⁷³ This variant of the work ethic, together with slave labor relations, determined southern political economists' conceptualization of the value theory.

According to Marx, classical political economists, beginning with William Petty in Britain and Boisguillebert in France and ending with Ricardo in Britain and Sismondi in France, grounded their analyses of the aspects of a commodity in two forms of labor--"use value is reduced to concrete labor or purposive productive activity, exchange-value to labor-time or homogeneous social labor."⁷⁴ For Marx, the problem with the early political economists from Petty down to Smith was their historical limitations in grasping the essence of the emerging bourgeois economy. This limitation, according to Marx, resulted in the ambiguity of their concepts of value. In pre-capitalist social relations, it was easy to see that concrete useful labor, such as agriculture, manufacture, and commerce, was the source of material wealth of a community and there was little difference between labor as a producer of a use-value, and labor as a producer of exchange-value since the product of labor, not commodity, was an elementary form of wealth.

In a similar vein, southern political economists encountered value theory from one aspect, that is, the exchangeable value of commodities. George Tucker explained that men make exchanges because of "self-love, natural desire and [the] seeking gratification," which are universal practices, and it is through exchanges that the emotions can manifest themselves. Political economy, he said, "aims to multiply objects of value, and inquires into the laws of their production and consumption,[thus], treats only of *exchangeable value*."⁷⁵ This assessment might partly reflect the influence of Smith, who disregarded the commodity aspect of use-value. This one-sided view also corresponded with the American experience in which, from the colonial period onwards, commerce, both internal and external, had augmented a rapid economic prosperity.

⁷³ Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 287,296-97.

⁷⁴ Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 52.

⁷⁵ George Tucker, *The Laws of Wages, Profits & Rent Investigated* (Philadelphia: E. L. Carey & A. Hart, 1837; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley, Bookseller, 1964), 2. Original emphasis.

For southern economists, value was associated with the feeling and the desire of men's "comprehending all that can impart pleasure to our senses, our tastes, or desires."⁷⁶ In his "Notes on Political Economy," De Bow did not even have a topic on "value" but only "exchangeable value," which is mainly about utility and its limited supply. Though labor was a source of material wealth, he thought that labor did not impart value to things but that their utility gave them value. And utility could come only from the desires and wants of men. Therefore the final factor that creates value in things is human desire. The subjective value theory was opposite to the objective value theory of the classical economists who recognized from the production of the emerging capitalist system that labor and the labor-time spent in producing a commodity create value. To accept the objective theory of value, southern economists had to accept that value was the same thing as market price and that labor, including slave labor, must be seen as an independent economic agent in a market economy. This ran counter to the economic reality in the South whereby slave labor was not a commodity. Slaves themselves did not sell their labor in a market like free laborers, rather their masters did it for them. In this sense, the market economy functioned mainly for and by the masters who, in turn, determined the value of things.

For De Bow, commerce or commodity exchange always benefited both parties, even though the terms of exchange were affected by demand and supply. Dependent relations as natural social relations among men rather than pure or abstract economic relations informed his economic ideas. George Tucker clearly stated the point. He said, "the exchangeable value of every commodity is determined by the number and wealth of those who desire it, the intensity of their desire, and the quantity offered for sale; and that these constituents of price are as uniform and immutable as the nature of man." De Bow concurred with Tucker that exchange-value exists "from a capacity of being appropriated, the possession of utility and a limited supply." It is determined by the relation which the supply of an article or commodity has to the demand for it. By the supply of an article he meant the "quantity which comes into the possession of the sellers, and is offered by them for sale during a given portion of time." By demand he did not mean desire to possess, rather it was "estimated by the number of offers to purchase made in a given

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 2,

time, at any given rate." The fall and rise of prices therefore follow the laws of demand and supply.⁷⁷

When discussing capital, which he defined as "appropriated wealth," De Bow did not perceive the reproductive power of capital but simply saw it as another form of wealth capable of promoting commodity production. According to De Bow, the elements of capital are wages of labor; instruments and constructions with which labor is performed; materials on which labor is exerted; finished commodity kept on hand by the capitalist; and money appropriated to the circulation of the other constituent portions of capital.⁷⁸ His concern about capital in the South was that it generally was reinvested in land and slaves, which made the planter more attached to agricultural production and more dependent on the world market, resulting in a relatively fluid financial situation for the planter. He thought whatever is consumed as capital is "productively consumed, otherwise unproductively." But slave labor as capital that was invested in a plantation was unproductive if the prices of staple crops were low and there were more slaves in the plantation than necessary. De Bow's criticism of plantation economy thus was not directed against the system in general, but against the unproductiveness of slave labor employed in the plantation. His advice was to diversify agriculture by putting some slaves to work in manufacturing. This would insure the planter a steady income without relying exclusively on the mercy of the external market and the northern merchants.

De Bow's economic theory thus was originated and developed within the framework of southern political ideologies and social philosophy based on the master-slave relations. Conceived as a foundation of southern society, the slave social formation, which obstructed the development of capitalist relations of production, provided the basis for southern criticisms of classical political economy. Slavery contributed to the economic rationalization of the precapitalist world that the control of labor presented no special legitimacy. Labor fit naturally into a hierarchical society, and remained a social responsibility of a paternal lord or master. Slavery enabled De Bow to redefine the economic aspects of human relations as against those of the free labor system. But slavery had its own limitations, for it arose as an attempt to solve

⁷⁷ De Bow, "Notes on Political Economy," 418-9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 418.

essentially mercantilist problems, not modern or industrial problems.⁷⁹ Herein lay the weaknesses of De Bow's economic analysis. Instead of looking forward, he looked backward and fell back solely on commerce as put forth by Smith in analyzing the South's economy and its prospects for further development. In a sense, De Bow represented the economic idea of merchant capital, namely that the progress and prosperity of society were based upon commodity exchanges. The "diversification of agriculture and industrial revolution," in his economic theory, thus, were designed to improve the economy and society of the South in the critical period of increased sectional conflict.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital*, 97-98.

CHAPTER VII

SLAVERY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

"We have the glorious, but awfully responsible mission of exhibiting to the world that supremest effort of humanity--the foundation of a political organization, in which the freedom of every member is the result of law, is preserved by justice, is harmonized by the true relations of labor and capital, and is sanctioned by the divine spirit of Christianity."

"God in History," a sermon by the Rev. James Warley Miles delivered before the graduating class of the College of Charleston in March, 1863.

One of the first locomotives constructed in the United States was purchased in 1830 for a South Carolina road. It was called the "Best Friend." After one year's use it was wrecked in an explosion caused by a Negro's sitting on the safety-valve, because he objected to the sound of the hissing steam. Edward Ingle, reflecting the sentiment of the postbellum generation toward the Old South, summed up the idea that would become a popular explanation for the destruction of the Old South that, "It was the misfortune of the South that in more than one form the negro, voluntarily or involuntarily, was placed upon the safety-valve of the engine of progress."¹ It is commonplace now to attribute the problems of the Old South to the presence of Negro slavery once the institution of slavery was eradicated and the slave regime gone forever. But the problem of slavery in the "age of capital" was a most difficult one for those who lived in the slave society, which guaranteed their wealth, power, and a social order which united "unequal races;" a society which unmistakably gave them their past and possibly a future. For De Bow, the urgent problem was how to reconcile slavery with the improvement of the southern economy, particularly "the industrial revolution" in the South. In his attempt to advocate the economic

¹ Edward Ingle, *Southern Sidelights: A Picture of Social and Economic Life in the South a Generation before the War* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1896), 99.

and social improvement of the South, he expressed the belief that slavery was necessary and natural for the South's economic prosperity and for political democracy in which rights and freedom were not for everybody, but only for those privileged by God.

De Bow's economic theory took root in merchant capital and directed itself to the practical concern of southerners regarding the immediate economic issues of the region. His aim was to solve those problems in the midst of economic fluctuations and the political decline of the South in the Union. In the language of the classical economists the main task for De Bow was how to make the South prosper. In retrospect, the Old South, as a slave economy, was unable to generate a general industrialization as in England, mainly because the industrialist and merchant classes were politically subservient to the planter class. The only route available for the slaveholders and merchants of the South was to increase investment in slaves and the means of production associated with them. Herein lay the paradox of political economy in the Old South. By directing capital from the merchant to the industrial sector in a slave society, what they could achieve was more wealth and quantitative growth in the plantation sector, but not the viable qualitative development of the industry in particular and of the whole southern economy in general. Restrained by a limited home market in the South and unable to compete with northern industry, southern industrialists could not accumulate enough capital to expand their industry. Furthermore, many industrialists were planters to begin with, while others had to buy plantations in order to improve their social status.² In the final analysis, the industrialists of the old South were therefore tied to the planter interest and could not strengthen their own class. Given the subservient role of the industrialists to the planters, it is certain that the former, even if they really wanted to industrialize the South, could not build the industrial sector that would be able to develop the whole economy as would normally happen in the expansion of capitalist production.³ In this regard, De Bow exemplified through his economic disseminations the conservative nature of merchant capital, which created friendly and supportive relations between the agrarian slaveholding and urban commercial and financial interests.

² Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 185-92.

³ E. Fox-Genovese and E. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 40.

De Bow's advocacy of manufacturing in the South came after the depression of 1837 and the cotton price slump in the 1840s, which resulted in the bankruptcy of the planters and emigration to the Southwest. The cotton crisis thus led to the economic decline of the South Atlantic states. In order to improve agriculture, De Bow believed the planters must diversify agriculture and develop manufactures so that they would not have to depend on European and northern markets for exporting cotton and importing manufactured goods. For De Bow the development of manufacturing would eventually strengthen the slave society, which was still based mainly on agriculture. He never thought of the South as an industrial society like England or the North. Early on when reflecting on the problem of agriculture in the South, he was concerned with the surplus of slave labor in the South and advised planters to diversify their slave labor into manufacturing pursuits. Later on in the 1850s when cotton prices rose and the southern economy expanded, the conflict between the North and the South also increased and gradually assumed the shape of antagonistic political struggle. The issue that the radical proslavery theorists thought would best serve their interests in this critical struggle was the reopening of the African slave trade. De Bow was one of the leaders of this movement. The importation of more African slaves into the South therefore contradicted De Bow's previous concern about the surplus of slave labor in the plantation South. The paradox of De Bow's economic thought as well as of other southerners was not a problem of "inconsistency" nor was it due to the irreconcilability of precapitalist and capitalist relations, as asserted by historians who overlook "the normal function of merchant capital in economic history in general and during the rise and expansion of capitalism in particular."⁴ Rather, as this chapter will show, De Bow's economic ideas were consistent with his southern ideology, and were responsive to the politics of slavery.

De Bow's ideas of slavery were basically the same throughout his life; that is, the belief that blacks were a naturally inferior race and suitable for manual work in a system where a superior race of whites had the obligation to provide and care for their physical and spiritual needs. Slave or dependent relations were natural and proved to be efficient in producing wealth

⁴ *Ibid.*, 40; see James Huston, "The Panic of 1857, Southern Economic Thought, and the Patriarchal Defense of Slavery," *The Historian* 46:2 (1984), 163-186; Allen Kaufman, *Capitalism, Slavery, and Republican Values: American Political Economists, 1819-1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982).

and prosperity. This does not mean that De Bow's ideas about advocating slavery never changed. In fact, his ideas on slavery became politically more aggressive as the sectional conflict intensified and, importantly, when the problem of slavery became an "international" issue after the British abolished slavery in their colonies. But his basic ideas about slavery still remained the same. In the latter half of the 1850's De Bow incorporated many new ideas from political economy, anthropology, sociology, and the natural sciences into his defense of slavery as a natural social organization. He firmly believed the slave system was in every way superior to the free labor system. The final attempt in the development of De Bow's ideas of slavery was to show that the conflict over the slavery issue was not only a contest between the two regions, north and south, but was a contest between two ideas of two different social systems, the slave and free, whose outcome would determine the future of world civilization. It is quite easy now for people to see that De Bow's ideas were wrong. The difficult thing to understand is why he so firmly believed in his ideas and to grasp his vision of economic development in a slave society.

Central to De Bow's economic thought thus were the ideas of slavery. In fact slavery was probably the single most influential idea in determining his economic thought. Formulated early in his youth, his ideas of slavery as a positive good developed into an aggressive proslavery ideology in the fifties. His early proslavery ideas were constructed on the Biblical arguments and Enlightenment philosophy, which maintained that slavery was a "natural" institution, while his later proslavery ideas were influenced by the increased sectional conflicts, and expanded to incorporate the scientific and racial arguments in the defense of slavery as the best state of social organization.⁵

⁵ See the best comprehensive treatment of the subject in William S. Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935; reprint edn., New York: Peter Smith, 1960). For a provoking discussion on the history of a proslavery argument see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1987). Refuting all studies of proslavery ideas in the South as "mythology," Tise argues that the proslavery ideas were not a result of southern distinctive mind. In fact, they were originated in the North and, as social thought, remained a central theme in the mainstream of American thought. See also Eugene D. Genovese, "Larry Tise's Proslavery: A Critique and An Appreciation," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 72 (Winter 1988), 670-83.

The early phase of De Bow's ideas of slavery centered on the biblical arguments that slavery was a "natural curse" pronounced by God as a punishment upon men both the slave and the master. "The fact is that," wrote De Bow, "immediately after the deluge, we have a decree of God, himself, condemning the children of Ham to perpetual servitude, using the very Hebrew word which translators render *slave*." After a few "Biblical" generations, slavery was referred to as a "well-established institution." Thus Abraham, the patriarch, had 318 slaves and, De Bow emphasized, "the laws of God strictly regulated this relation, in all its aspects, and his own peculiar people were *commanded* to buy slaves from the heathen, and not to steal them, and instructed how to treat them after they were bought." In fact, De Bow asserted, one of the crimes denounced in the Bible was denoted by a term which meant, literally, "slave stealers" or "abolitionists."⁶ Regarding the abolitionists and their ideologies, De Bow stated that if he had power he would punish the abolitionist by compelling him "to take the place of some of our southern planters with a hundred negroes for twelve months--that he might determine how much less the lord such an individual really is, than he expected?"⁷ De Bow, like other southerners, thus firmly believed that slavery was ordained by God. When he heard a Dr. Lacey of England, an abolitionist, propose that Christianity "was of necessity debarred from any interference in the institutions of Governments, among the rest that of slavery itself," he retorted that this was an absurd opinion, because slavery was "an institution of so general a prevalence, among the nations of the world." Could it be possible that God had neglected the injustice of the institution? Given the backward state of blacks in Africa, De Bow thought that "the mission of Jesus Christ was to benefit the condition, NOT to abrogate the bonds of the Slave."⁸

Slavery was a natural condition fit for Africans whose social development was still in the barbarian stage. De Bow, as we have seen, argued from the background of Enlightenment thought that society progressed according to its intelligence or intellectual development. He contended that the light that made the master civilized also caused him to feel the suffering of the

⁶ "The Origin, Progress and Prospects of Slavery," *De Bow's Review* 9 (July 1850), 15-16. Original emphasis.

⁷ "Random Thoughts on Slavery," in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁸ *Ibid.*

slave, even more than the slave himself. In effect, he argued that the slave was "an African from Africa, a *benighted land*" which, like Europe, had previously been enlightened. But somehow the "lamp" had expired in Africa and some portions of its people were forced into slavery. Therefore the curse did not fall upon them that much before the advent of slavery in modern times. The crucial point in De Bow's argument is his explanation of why the Africans in the time of slavery did not "mourn" as much over their bondage and enslavement as their masters. When the "light" went off in Africa, it also deprived the people of the capability to acquire knowledge, the most important factor in a modern and civilized society, which contributed to the refinement of individual senses and perceptions especially of guilt and sorrow. He believed that the slave did not "suffer those severe pangs which the exquisite refinement of the age are ever inflicting upon his masters." Since the slave was not a subject for anyone to be jealous or envious of, he enjoyed his life in his own ways, in which "his very pride is his bliss,[and] his master's plantation is his world." De Bow therefore pronounced that "contentment like this is not the gift of civilization and refinement, it is the spontaneous offspring of an unrefined age." De Bow demonstrated "the character of the unenlightened," which lacked the "sensibility to effect the keenest that enlightened nature knows," by giving an account of two cases from his experience to support his beliefs.

The first of a negro whose wife has left him for another. He told the circumstance to me with apparent glee. "Dam Um" said he, "he tink he spits me--*dis child can git an udder wife*." The second is of an Indian. A Western traveller had taken rather many liberties with a beautiful young squaw of the tribe and gave her a small piece of money as the fee. The next day who should call on him but the husband and chief. The man looked for instant death as the injured savage led forth his *wife*. But mark his astonishment. The chief had taken away the money and was willing to receive more on the same terms.

De Bow conceived the word "slave" to be the same as "servant" to which he gave a supporting evidence from Scripture.⁹ In his Commonplace book he defined slaves as follows:

⁹ De Bow explained in the footnote as follows:

Called in England villains for these were in the worse sense perhaps. Slaves, in Denmark they were called "boors" in Sweden, "traals." With reference to villains, they might be bought & sold with land and even without it and the yeoman had an appeal of rape against the lord. The civil law maxim "partus sequitur ventorem" did not hold. The monks & monasteries persuaded the lords to sett[sic] them free but could not feel in conscience to do it themselves. In Africa the people must bring in the kings' produce and do it with music & c.

2 Black[stone]; Chapter 4.

It is interesting to note that De Bow conceived of slaves as isolated individuals whose bondage was a result of being born in a 'dark' or 'backward' country. For him the slave always appeared as a natural phenomenon and had existed since ancient times down to his time. He acknowledged that slavery was found in the earliest advanced nations of antiquity; it was an old institution long before Rome had been founded. More important was that slavery in the South presented no worse aspect in the "civilized nations of the present day" than it did among the ancients.

His allusions to the metaphor of "light" as a symbol of progress, civilization and justice are frequent in his early writings as well as the opposite metaphors of "dark", "black" and "night," which implied a state of backwardness, barbarity and immorality, without regard to race, as "race" came to be understood. Actually De Bow seems to put more emphasis on the nature of slaves as being "dark" rather than "Africans."¹⁰ With "darkness" he can equate this

"Slaves" and "Servants" are evidently synonymous terms in Scripture. For by the laws of war, all prisoners captured were bondmen ("slaves"), *Levit Cap. XXV-44*. The Syrians were taken "prisoners of war," and the Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts." *II Sam Cap VIII-6*. These terms being synonymous, we can intepret justly the passage in the New Testament, "Servants be obedient to them, that are your masters," *Ephesians Cap VI-5*.

¹⁰ De Bow did not have the perceptive mind of James Thornwell to argue that the Bible sanctioned slavery in general not black slavery in particular. "Members of all races, including the Caucasians, were subject to lawful enslavement and that slavery was established as a special case of a wider social subordination," Eugene D. Genovese, "James Thornwell and Southern Religion," *Southern Partisan* 7 (Summer 1987), 20.

state to the lack and deficiency of "knowledge" or "light" which, he believed, was the prime factor in generating progress and the refinement of the individual mind and senses. Proslavery ideas therefore allowed him conveniently to place "blacks" in a barbarous stage in a linear social development, and also to justify their guidance and protection by civilized men and societies. In this sense, slavery brought them into the rank of a modern world order and at the same time perfected and harmonized the natural hierarchical social order.

In his early thought on slavery, De Bow was concerned with the misfortune of the master in holding slaves. Slavery was a "bitter curse" pronounced by the Almighty upon the head of Ham, and a "degree of punishment" to the "entrusted executioner" of that curse. He demonstrated the plight and punishment of the master for he believed that the "curse of Jehovah, instead of being visited upon the descendants of Ham, is in a more abundant manner the portions of his Brother's." This punishment with all its virulence "magnified and remagnified by the advancement of Civilization, and the increased susceptibilities of our nature."

De Bow gave four reasons for considering the masters to be unfortunate and unhappy people. First, "holding a possession in slaves,--are indeed curses of the most inveterate and withering nature," for it led to the ills of affluence and indolence on the part of the masters and bodily "afflictions of voluptuousness" and sorrows on the part of the slaves. Second, from slavery as a social system, the master acquired power and the "right to tyrannize" over the slaves. Such power and privilege also affected the mind of the master with a "remorse and torments of conscience, with the ultimate dread of insurrection with all its terrific accompaniments of blood, slaughter and devastation." Third, for some of the more "humane and sensitive" slaveholders, who believed in their important duty, a "perpetual discouragement and perplexity" accrued when they discovered that "the efforts to promote the moral welfare of the slave, prove altogether abortive." Finally, there were dangers from those who did not possess slaves. On the one hand, there was envy in its most painful extreme; on the other hand, there was an "over-nice sensibility, which ensues when the mental eye penetrates the dark curtain that separates them from their southern neighbors." For these people what appeared to them were only the "terrific chains and manacles in the gore of fated victims."

It is interesting also to examine De Bow's views on nonslaveholders. On the eve of the Civil War, he strongly emphasized the importance of the nonslaveholding class in maintaining the institution of slavery, and in the success of the secession movement for the

"entire social, industrial, and political independence of the South." De Bow contended that it was easy to show that "the interest of the poorest non-slaveholder among us is to make common cause with, and die in the last trenches, in defence of the slave property of his more favored neighbor."¹¹

The nonslaveholders of the South, according to De Bow, might be classed as either those who desire and are incapable of purchasing slaves, or such as those who have the means to purchase and do not, because of the absence of the motive, preferring to hire or employ cheaper white labor. They were either urban or rural, including among the former the merchants, traders, mechanics, laborers, and other classes in the towns and cities; and among the latter, chiefly the tillers of the soil. The argument he used was whether the conflict or competition between slave labor and free labor existed in the South. For the merchant, De Bow argued, his products and commodities and profits all come, directly and indirectly, from the slave labor. In the absence of every other source of wealth in the South, the mercantile interests were so interwoven with those of slave labor as to be almost identical.

This was also true with other groups in the cities, such as, the mechanics, laborers, clerks, lawyers, physicians, teachers, and preachers. As competition between slave labor and free labor did not exist in the cities, it also did not exist in the rural areas where a self-sufficient plantation economy prevented the necessary growth and expansion of a market, and, therefore, slave labor could not be profitably used in the cultivation of commodities. The only place where conflict and competition between slave labor and free labor existed was in the production of the exportable crops like cane, cotton, tobacco, and rice. Here again, De Bow contended, the free labor could not sustain the tropical sun and fatal miasmas, which are alone the condition of profitable culture, and had to retire when the occasion offered. "Any attempt," wrote De Bow, "to reverse the laws which God has ordained, is attended with disease and death." Since there was no conflict or competition between slave labor and free labor in the South and, because the Scriptures and the "principles of universal polity" had defended and justified the institution of slavery, De Bow, therefore, optimistically declared that, "a class conscientiously objecting to the

¹¹ "The Non-Slaveholders of the South: Their Interest in the Present Sectional Controversy Identical With that of the Slaveholders," *De Bow's Review* 30 (January 1861), 67.

ownership of slave property does not exist at the South." In his estimation, one-third of the population of the entire South were slaveholders, and half of them possessed less than five slaves. He thus contended that the slaveholders were greater in numbers than "the holders of any other species of property," in any part of the world. This was a proof that slave property was "an interest of the whole community."¹²

In regard to his concern for the politics of the non-slaveholder class, De Bow put a great emphasis on industrial development in the South, which, he thought, would open more economic opportunities to the nonslaveholders as well as strengthen the slave system. To be sure, De Bow's concept of an "industrial revolution" was not the same as that of the Industrial Revolution which took place in England between the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution together with the technological innovations, by substituting machine for human skill and inanimate power for human and animal force, brought a shift from handicraft to manufacture and gave birth to a modern economy. The heart of the Industrial Revolution was "an interrelated succession of technological changes" in the three major areas: mechanical devices, animate power, and raw materials.¹³ Industrialization also presupposed the creation of a home market and the subservience of country to town. De Bow's ideas of industrial development, however, were informed by the political economy of slavery, which, essentially presupposed harmony between labor and capital, country and town, and the existence of a market economy but not a market society.¹⁴ De Bow's "industrial revolution," therefore, would not have led to the reorganization of southern agriculture in order to provide the necessary base for the successful development of industry as happened in England. His ideas were not meant for an "agrarian revolution" which

¹² *Ibid.*, 67-77.

¹³ David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological change and industrial development in western Europe from 1750 to the present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 1.

¹⁴ A market society is essentially a capitalist society, where labor-power becomes a commodity. The Old South had a market economy but it did not have a market society. The implication of this distinction is very important for it distinguishes the South from the capitalist society; see Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 125.

would result in land reform, the separation of farmers from the land, and most important the creation of a home market for manufactured commodities.¹⁵

De Bow, it should be noted, was not alone in his mistrust of the impact of manufacturing industry. "Industrial consciousness" in America during the early national period was wary of the moral and social consequences of a manufacturing system as already shown in England. In a letter to M. Say, Jefferson acknowledged the sound logic of Malthus's work on population, but thought it might produce a different result if applied to the United States. He went on to comment that in Europe "the best distribution is supposed to be that which places the manufacturing alongside that of the agricultural; so that one part feed both, and the other part furnish both with cloths and other comforts." But he doubted that this would be better for America where land was abundant and population scarce. Furthermore, when one's duties and interests were at variance, Jefferson suggested that we ought to suspect some fallacy in our reasonings. In solving the problem of manufacturing and agriculture, he said "we should allow just weight to the moral and physical preference to the agricultural over the manufacturing man."¹⁶ Yet, Jeffersonian agrarianism was never opposed to mechanization, commerce, science, and mass production as was characteristic of agrarian protest in England. When the time came the early advocates of domestic manufactures in America could easily argue on the basis of national interest and morality. By the 1820s home manufactures had gained acceptance in the North and the dissemination of practical and technical knowledge relating to the advancement of manufacturing was on its way.¹⁷

In the South, prejudices against manufacturing and commerce were common. William Gilmore Simms bemoaned the harmful effects of industrialism on morals, warning that

¹⁵ Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 157-79.

¹⁶ Thomas Jefferson to M. Say, 4th February 1804, in *Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*, p. 704, quoted in Edmond Cocks, "The Malthusian Theory in Pre-Civil War America: An Original Relation to the Universe," *Population Studies* 20 (March 1967), 345.

¹⁷ Samuel Rezneck, "The Rise and early development of industrial consciousness in the United States, 1760-1830," *Journal of Business and Economic History* 4 (August 1932), 784-811.

"all the railroads in the world can [not] carry one poor soul to heaven."¹⁸ A report on the establishment of cotton and woolen manufacturing in North Carolina clearly expressed the view that, "our habits and prejudices are against manufacturing, but we must yield to the force of things, and profit by the indications of nature."¹⁹ Those who advocated the building of cotton mills in the South always asserted that "southern industrialization could be a community activity worthy of encouragement." Prejudices aside, southerners with their modern knowledge and learning came to acknowledge industrial pursuits as a necessary evil for the progress of society, if not as a way of life. By the mid-1850s, an English traveler noted, many men in the South spoke of industrialization "as if it were an affair of patronage and encouragement," and a thing to be extemporized by the resolutions of a commercial convention.²⁰ The contradictory views on southern industrialization should be regarded as normal because of the contrast between the social and economic conditions of the South and England or the North. The generation of De Bow grew up during the period of the Industrial Revolution in England and perceived the confusion arising out of the emerging social system which we now call capitalism. Like his colleagues in the South, De Bow was aware of the exploitation of free laborers, especially female and child labor, in the modern industries of England and the North. In a sense, his response to the Industrial Revolution was similar to those of Edmund Burke and William Cobbett combined.²¹

¹⁸ Quoted in James Farmer, Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986), 157.

¹⁹ Report on the Establishment of Cotton and Woolen Manufacturers and on the Growing of Wool, Made in the House of Commons of North Carolina on Tuesday, January 1, 1828 (Raleigh, 1828), 60; quoted in Herbert Collins, "The Southern Industrial Gospel before 1860," *Journal of Southern History* 12 (August 1946), 386.

²⁰ James Stirling, *Letters from the Slave States* (London, 1857), 79, quoted in Collins, "Southern Industrial Gospel before 1860," 390.

²¹ Burke's critique of industrialism was based on his conservative philosophy while Cobbett's on the radical ideology; both contrasts furnish a picture of the confusing mind in response to the emerging of industrial society in England. See Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society, 1780-1950* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 3-20.

In his speech, "Southern Industrial Revolution," delivered in New Orleans, and at the Jackson, Mississippi, Railroad Convention, January, 1852, James De Bow began his economic analysis of the South with the rigor and fire with which the question had been addressed many times before in many other commercial conventions. "Let us not argue too strongly, from what, after all, may be but the most deceptive appearances. Our disappointments have been so many and so bitter in the past, and we have had the chalice broken so often at our lips, that it is impossible, even with all the sanguine characteristics of our nature, not to be agitated with doubts and fears," commenced De Bow. The Old South had fought the battles of the Revolution--which gave this country the statesmen, the generals, and the wealth of those early times. The wealth of the nation concentrated then upon "the agriculture, the commerce, and, even to some extent, the manufactures of the continent, but which ha[d] lost, or [wa]s losing everything else, save that agriculture." He saw clearly how the South had fulfilled so little of her promise. Originally she had manufactures which were coeval with those of the North. Nearly half a century had passed since then and yet the South, though growing nearly all of the cotton required for the world's consumption, left "the profitable business of its conversion into fabrics to other and to foreign hands!"

Similarly, the South was losing her commercial competitiveness to the North, when in the beginning while New England struggled with the whale in northern seas, the "rich argosies of the South, laden with abundant products, were seeking the markets of all Europe." Now, however, New York and New England conducted nine-tenths of the imports of the country and one half of its exports, though nearly all of these exports were of southern materials, and much of the imports were for southern consumption. De Bow calculated that the South lent from year to year a "trading capital to the North amounting to nearly 100 million dollars, and upon which the North receives the entire profits!" He went on to note that the first steamship that ever crossed the broad Atlantic sailed from the southern port of Savannah, and the South once had the longest railroad in the world. But now the South was lagging behind the North in all major aspects of commerce and manufactures except agriculture.

All of this resulted in the economic stagnation of the South, which in turn, De Bow argued, engendered two significant problems. First, the inability of the South to expand its market commensurate with its production which was mainly staple crops. According to the "rules of legitimate political economy," De Bow said, "mere production from the soil soon finds

its limit and limits population." Agricultural products had to depend on the market for they hardly, in the long run, commanded the market. Second, the surplus slave labor became "consumers in a larger degree than producers." With the increase of the slave population and of agricultural production but not the market, De Bow reasoned, labor then was expended without profit--"lost to all the purposes of improvement, and of advanced prosperity and wealth." He then proceeded to give the planters a "practical remedy" to solve their economic problems.

First, "the construction of a system of railroads through our limits." The railroads have "the highest influence in diversifying the industry of a people." They open a country and extend population throughout the country, thus creating the very trade that supports them. According to De Bow, railroads contribute to a rise in the price of lands "by bringing them into more immediate connection with market," thus insuring a pay back to the often large investment in lands. And most important, the railroads build up cities and manufacturing villages. The construction of railroads in the South was even cheaper and easier than the North because southerners could use surplus slave labor. In addition, the South and West had an immense public domain belonging to the states, which De Bow argued "can be procured for the mere asking."

Second, after the construction of a system of railroads connecting every section of the South, the natural course was to resort to manufactures. Here again, "the industrial revolution" was to take place in a simple and natural manner. De Bow's rule was that, "where the coal and the iron, and the provisions are, there will be the seat of manufacturing empire." He calculated that the Ohio Valley could be the prospective Manchester and Lowell of the Union. He nevertheless thought "this [was] the truth, but not the whole truth." For the South to become the Manchester of the Union, it had to make a "systematic and combined movement to break down northern supremacy" in manufacturing. In this respect, the South had many great advantages over the North, in particular the ability to use surplus Negro labor in cotton mills, the proximity of raw materials, and the availability of capital.

Finally, what the South needed in order to diversify its industry was the "extension of its foreign commerce." For De Bow, commerce or the exchange of products was the source of wealth. Thus he insisted that the whole business of exchanging the products of the South from export to import must be in the hands of southerners. De Bow refuted the claim that the North was more maritime, arguing that the early periods of the South showed that southern foreign

commerce was relatively larger than now, "and in the nations of the old world, the most maritime and commercial were always those of the South." It was only lately that the North swayed the trident of the seas, a situation which, De Bow believed, was the result of "artificial causes," not "in the nature of things."²²

Clearly the things that De Bow advocated in order for the South to achieve "industrial revolution," namely the diversification of surplus slave labor, the creation of railroads and manufactures, which, in turn, would provide more opportunities and employment for the small farmers and poor whites, were not going to create viable manufacturing in the South. His vision of "industrialization" in the South thus also was based upon the idea of a social harmony between labor and capital and balanced growth between agriculture, commerce, and manufactures. For De Bow, economic development meant southern prosperity, which as he defined it, did not mean only increasing the numbers of factories, railroads, harbors and volumes of export of staple crops, although these economic aspects, certainly, were central to the growth and prosperity of the South. Rather, De Bow's definition of southern prosperity also included an increase in the means of human comfort together with the preservation of the south's institutions. Given this perception about industrial revolution, and to insure that the progress of industry in the South would not result in the same social problems as the North and Europe, he thus emphasized the harmonious connection between labor and capital and the moral aspect that the factory system in the South should have. Indeed, De Bow saw his industrial program as a prerequisite for the improvement of agriculture and commerce. Even though he was cautious about the nature and impact of industrial development programs that would be implemented in the South, he was in general more optimistic about the progress and wealth brought about by manufacturing industry.

Regarding the word industry, it had different meanings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In industrializing England, the word had come to refer to practices, to types of institutions, and most important, signified the breakdown of village life and of rural society.²³

²² [J.D.B. De Bow], "Southern Industrial Revolution," *The Industrial Resources, Statistics, &c. of the United States and...of the Southern and Western States* (New York and London: D. Appleton & Co., 1854; reprint ed., New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1966), 76-82.

²³ Theodore R. Marmor, "Anti-Industrialism and the Old South: The Agrarian Perspective of John C. Calhoun," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (July 1967), 385-6.

De Bow and other southerners, however, used "industry" in the older meaning of a personal attribute, workmanlike diligence. When De Bow coined the phrase, "industrial revolution in the South" as a title for his published speech, he meant the development of the three great industrial pursuits, namely agriculture, manufacturing and commerce. When discussing industry as practiced, James Orr, president of the South Carolina Institute for the Promotion of Agriculture, the Mechanic Arts, and Manufactures, defined the term as meaning "to produce, transform, and distribute all such material objects as are suited to satisfy the wants of mankind. The primary *production* of these objects is assigned to the husbandman, the fisherman, and the miner; their *transformation* to the manufacturer and artisan; and their *distribution* to the engineer, shipwright, and sailor." Notice the emphasis of the author on the attributive role of mechanical labor in "production" and in its "transformation" as well as its "distribution" of commodities. This notion of industry came, not from his experience of manufacturing industry in the South, but from Dr. Ure's *Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures, and Mines*. The central factor in operative industry thus were machines, which, James Orr believed, had saved or facilitated human labor.²⁴ The important branch of mechanical industry was manufactories, by which Orr meant to work by machinery. Driven by cheap and abundant water-power, Orr believed that Southern industry could manufacture many commodities for the wants of its people instead of buying from the North.

The idealized views of southern industrialization can be seen from Judge Joseph Lumpkin when, in the campaign for southern industry, he assessed the increase of the cotton mills and their production in the South, which, in turn, led to the expansion of cotton plantations. He attributed the improvement of agriculture to the advancement of manufactures. "Indeed," said Lumpkin, "to my mind it is a self-evident truth, that it can be rapidly improved in this way, and in no other." Citing the example of England, he said the South must produce for its own

²⁴ John Stuart Mill says in his *Principles of Political Economy*: "It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being." Quoting Mill, Karl Marx said "Mill should have said, 'of any human being not fed by other people's labor,' for there is no doubt that machinery has greatly increased the number of distinguished idlers," Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. I (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 492 and footnote.

needs and not buy from others.²⁵ In this the South must "increase the class of consumers among ourselves," and abandon "prejudices, however deep-rooted, against this new order of things." Finally, Lumpkin acknowledged the positive effects of a manufacturing establishment in fostering the various branches of trade and business and in producing "comfort, refinement and intelligence," and in stimulating the growth and populousness of the surrounding country. In his vision of industrial regeneration of the South, "first, the factory goes up; and soon it is surrounded with a beautiful village, with its hundreds, perhaps thousands, of clean, contented and thrifty inhabitants; then comes the hotels, the churches, the schools; next, the machine-shops and mills of every variety, the stores, post office, and, perhaps, finally, the savings bank."²⁶

It is significant that Lumpkin gave the last priority of industrial development to banks. The antipathy of early Americans, especially southerners, to banks is well-known and needs no discussion here. But like it or not, the fact is that industries could not grow without financial support from banks, and the South was in dire need of capital investment in manufactures. De Bow himself was well aware of the lack of capital for the promotion of manufacturing industry, but he, like other good southerners, still appealed for help from the individual planters rather than from the banks. De Bow and other advocates of manufacturing industry in the South thus rested their hopes on the planters' investment of their profits from plantation agriculture in manufactures instead of reinvesting them in land and slaves as they normally did.²⁷ As a matter of fact, he said there was an ample supply of capital in the South (more than three million dollars) but this had been invested in land and slaves, which gave only a low yield of three percent compared to the average rates of 16 percent return on industrial

²⁵ The Southern Commercial Conventions, in the 1830s, following the famous sailors' oaths, "Neptunian resolutions," which said 'Never to kiss the maid when they can kiss the mistress, unless they like the maid the best,' resolved that "southern merchants should never buy in the North; when they could purchase at the South, unless they could buy cheaper at the North." Of course, they continued to buy from the North because the commodities were cheaper there. See Commercial Convention of the Southern and Western States, Charleston, *The Journal of proceedings*, (Charleston: Walker & Evans, 1854).

²⁶ Joseph Lumpkin, "Industrial Regeneration of the South," *De Bow's Review* 12 (January 1852), 48.

²⁷ "Development of Southern Industry," *De Bow's Review* 19 (July 1855), 1-22.

investments.²⁸ The unwillingness of capitalists in the South to change their investments, thought De Bow, kept the banks overcharging those who needed to borrow money from them. The diversion to manufacturing would in a short time double the dividends. "The difficulty of overcoming the *vis inertia* of our citizens is," wrote De Bow, "we are satisfied, the only obstacle to success."²⁹

When De Bow advocated the diversification of agriculture as a remedy for overproduction in the single crop system, he had in mind the historical role of a "distribution of labor" in effecting changes in social development. He thought it was the single most important factor that led man from the "rude stage"(or barbarian) to the higher stage of manufacture and commerce (or civilization). The best example of the "distribution of labor" and "its precious results" in his mind was a division of labor between the slave and master and the material and cultural prosperity of a slave society.

According to Adam Smith, the importance of the division of labor was its contribution to the greatest improvement of the productive powers. The famous example that people often use to illustrate Smith's idea of the division of labor is the pin-maker in a factory. De Bow, however, thought that example reflected the horrors of the system of manufacturing and its division of labor, which degenerated the human condition. When he applied the concept of division of labor in his analysis of economic development in the South, he shifted the emphasis from the improvement of the productive powers to the preservation of the harmonious relations between slaves and masters, and between slaveholders and nonslaveholders, which, in the final analysis, would increase the wealth and progress of the South. For De Bow, the division of labor was informed by master-slave relations in the South, which, essentially, was not a market society. He believed that slave labor had not been productively employed in the economy of the

²⁸ William Gregg estimated that an investment in lands and Negroes paid about three percent when engaged in the culture of cotton, *De Bow's review* 8 (February 1850), 158. Recent studies show that the average of return on other forms of investment besides industry in the antebellum South yielded six percent, see H.O. Stekler, *Profitability and Size of Firm* (Berkeley, 1963), quoted in Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 147.

²⁹ "Manufacturing Capacities of Charleston," *De Bow's Review* 3 (April 1847), 347.

South. In the future it should be distributed in a proper way, that is, it had to be diversified and a portion of it directed to manufacturing purposes.

During the last half of the 1840s when cotton prices were low and there was no new territory to be added to the South, De Bow was convinced that in the near future slave labor would outgrow the land, and the pursuit of agriculture, together with slave property, would become of little or no value. Yet, he believed that the Negro was defective as a laborer, because of his inferior race, even though all the Negroes had been employed, there had always been a deficiency of labor in the South.³⁰ Since he thought that "every slave is a laborer, and must ever remain so," the division of labor must therefore involve the utilization of the slave labor, and its objective was to increase the aggregate output of the whole slave labor system, not simply that of the individual slave. De Bow's ideas of the division, or what he called "distribution," of labor thus never called for an increase in the productivity of individual laborers, but were concerned more with the duties and responsibilities of the slave and master. Accordingly, his ideas were consistent with his organic concept of society and the prevailing institution of slavery. But these ideas were different from those of the classical political economists who emphasized sufficient capital accumulation and technical progress to develop an extensive division of labor. Genovese, in his critique of the political economy of the slave South, thus concludes that the problem of division of labor in the South was its low level of productivity, caused by the inefficiency of the slaves and the general backwardness of society, including the lack of diversified agriculture and manufactures. In the end the low level of productivity forced the South to specialize more in staple crop production under virtually colonial conditions.³¹

For De Bow, the main problem of industrial improvement lay in the capability of the South to diversify its agriculture, including labor and capital. His position on slave labor can be seen from his writing that, "slave labor [is] the labor indicated by nature, and history, and

³⁰ De Bow's testimony before the Congress after the Civil War, *De Bow's Review*, After the War Series, 1 (February 1866), 134.

³¹ Eugene D. Genovese, "The Limits of Agrarian Reform in the Slave South" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1960), 43-48. The same chapter is published later in his *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 43-69.

providential appointment for this region."³² The problem with slave labor, according to De Bow, was how to maximize its employment. The advantage of slave labor over free labor was its cheapness. In 1850 the cost of a slave operative in a factory was about \$75 a year, while that of a white operative was \$116 a year. This was the best evidence, De Bow argued, "that when the channels of agriculture are choked, the manufacturing of her own productions will open new channels of profitable employment for our slaves."³³ Furthermore, he thought that slaves could work in a factory because first the jobs were so simple that there was no need to educate blacks to perform them, and they could work in the mills without an interruption from the age of 8 years. Second, when these slaves became expert hands, the factory owner need not worry about them leaving the job, which was something white workers were constantly doing.³⁴

Since De Bow's economic thought implied the unity, not conflict, of classes, he believed the association of labor and capital was best served in the South in such a way that labor would be done mainly by the black, inferior race and capital would be represented by the white, superior race. Black labor directed by "the superior intelligence of the white race, and aided by their capital, constit[uted] one of the most efficient and profitable classes of laborers in the world."³⁵ The idea that labor and capital were not in conflict but naturally existed together in an orderly society, presupposed that labor must be an inferior race, and because of their natural differences and inequalities, it was socially and historically right for the two races to have unequal relations. Notice that in De Bow's mind capital had no power of its own, but simply aided the master or capitalist in production with slave labor. With the preponderance of slave labor in the South, De Bow argued, capital was in total control of labor. Capitalists could always resort to slave labor whenever conflicts with white workers occurred. Since slaves did not work for wages, had no rights as to working hours, could not strike for wages, or leave employment at

³² Quoted in Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 3.

³³ Ingle, *Southern Sidelights*, (1896), 76; *De Bow's Review* 9 (October 1850), 432; idem, 11 (August 1851), 319.

³⁴ William Gregg, "Manufactures at the South," *De Bow's Review* 8 (February 1850), 139.

³⁵ [John Townsend], *De Bow's Review* 10 (January 1851), 108.

their pleasure, and because their basic needs had been provided by masters, there were no causes for labor and capital conflict. It was through slave labor that the United States had become the second commercial nation of the world, De Bow asserted, and "by the same agency they are destined ere long to become the first."³⁶

The contradictory views of southern industrialization also appeared in the debate over which was the best labor force, black or white, to use in manufactures. Southern leaders, industrialists, and intellectuals were divided into two camps; one group suggested that slave labor was suitable and economically viable for use in factories; another countered with the argument that this would bar the poor whites from factory employment and thus deprive them from gaining more opportunities to buy and own slaves for their own advancement. The political ramifications of alienating poor whites from manufacturing and from owning slaves of their own was to create class conflict between the poor whites and the slaveholding class and to lessen their loyalty to the institution of slavery. This argument, which was proposed by William Gregg, soon found another critic. C.G. Memminger and Chancellor Harper argued that employing poor whites in industries would create the white working classes whose political ideologies, like northern Lowellers and Abolitionists, would be opposite to those of the planter class.³⁷ The interesting point here is that the debate over the use of free or slave labor had little to do with industrialization per se, but the arguments boiled down to the political question of the preservation of the Old South as a slave society.

Another reason for the pro-factory movement was the argument that factories would also contribute to the upholding of morality and order in southern society. William Gregg of Graniteville was one of the advocates of this idea and had applied it in his factory. He provided good and clean housing together with a school and church for his workers (mainly poor whites) and their children. The factory village, producing commodities as well as educating and christianizing poor whites and blacks, thus became the model which De Bow believed would provide a solid economic base for a prosperous and independent South.³⁸ In the end, his call for

³⁶ "Manufactures in the South and West," *The Industrial Resources*, vol.2, 111.

³⁷ See the able discussion of the political significance of slavery in southern industrialization in Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South*, 204-32.

³⁸ *De Bow's Review* 11 (January 1851), 123-140.

an "industrial revolution" in the South was directed to the planter class whose duty it was to maintain "a physical and moral power necessary for the preservation of the peculiar institutions of the South--a policy that should never be lost sight of by the slaveholder."³⁹

The most interesting development in De Bow's proslavery thought was in the decade preceding the Civil War, in particular, during the movement for the reopening of the African slave trade in which his active participation led to the presidency of the African Labor Supply Association. The movement attracted wide audiences in the South and, like the tariff and states' rights issues, brought up many supporting and opposing views. But these conflicting opinions on the reopening of the slave trade did not mean that the South, as Ronald Takaki has asserted, was having 'an internal crisis.'⁴⁰ Later the supporters of the secession of the South included those who had opposed the foreign slave trade.

An earlier suggestion to reopen the foreign slave trade had come from the New Orleans *Courier* in 1839.⁴¹ This was probably initiated by the early southern commercial movement which called for direct trade with Europe in 1837. It was not until after the Compromise of 1850, which De Bow considered a defeat for the South, that the campaign for the slave trade began to receive serious attention. Undoubtedly the first proposal to reopen the African slave trade in the fifties came from South Carolina. A grand jury in the Williamsburg District submitted the proposal to the South Carolina Legislature in 1854, declaring the law abolishing the slave trade a grievance and expressing the opinion that the reestablishment of the trade would be a blessing to the American people. Upon receiving the document, the South Carolina Legislature expressed the view that after the year 1808, the laws prohibiting the slave trade were constitutional because the South had acquiesced in them till the present time. The Committee on the Colored People of the South Carolina Legislature, however, was decidedly of

³⁹ "Manufactures in the South and West," 112.

⁴⁰ Ronald Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), 33.

⁴¹ Thomas P. Martin, "The Influence of Trade(in Cotton and Wheat) on Anglo-American Relations, 1829-1846" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1922), 128-9, quoted in W.J. Carnathan, "The Proposal to Reopen the African Slave Trade in the South, 1854-1860," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 25 (October 1926), 412.

the opinion that the reestablishment of the trade, under the sanction of law and commercial regulation, would confer a blessing on the African race.

The slave trade, reported the Committee, would aid in extending slave territory, would add wealth and political strength to the slave states. At the same time, however, it would cause a great reduction in the price of slaves, reduce the profits of rearing slaves, tend to drive the institution from the border states, and thus bring the cordon of free states closer to the slaveholding states. At that time, no action was taken by the South Carolina Legislature for there was no demand by the people.⁴² The Southern Commercial Conventions in the late 1850s, at Savannah (1856), Knoxville(1857), Montgomery (1858), and Vicksburg (1859) finally brought the slave trade issue to the people. In the end, however, the movement failed in its attempts to repeal the state and federal laws prohibiting the foreign slave trade, but it succeeded, according to W.E.B. Du Bois, in "sweeping away nearly all theoretical opposition to the trade, and left the majority of Southern people in an attitude which regarded the reopening of the African slave-trade as merely a question of expediency."⁴³ Importantly, the movement for the reopening of the African slave trade had developed a proslavery ideology and formulated a social theory which directly challenged that of free society.

When the demands for southern economic independence were resurrected in the fifties, it was almost certain that the movement for the revival of the African slave trade would be revived because it was probably the only issue that embodied the fundamental contradiction between the free society of the North and the slave South and represented the proslavery ideology in its most radical development. De Bow had published in 1850 the statistics of the slave trade at Charleston, from 1804-1807, where 202 vessels entered the port with African slaves, to show that, in fact, most of the slaves were imported by those who loudly repudiated slavery. The vessels belonged to Charleston 61; Rhode Island 59; and the most (70) belonged to Britain. Of the total 39,075 imported slaves during this period, 21,027 were imported by

⁴² W.J. Carnathan, "The Proposal to Reopen the African Slave Trade in the South, 1854-1860," 413.

⁴³ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), 174.

foreigners, 14,605 by northerners, and 3,443 by citizens of the slaveholding states.⁴⁴ De Bow wrote, "no State, or class of States, can be more responsible than another, for the introduction and extension of the institution of slavery in the Union." Taking into account of the whole Union, whatever the merits or demerits of the institution of slavery, he argued, "ours is but a small share of responsibility for its continuance, and none for its introduction."⁴⁵

The late Southern Commercial Conventions were inevitably turned into political meetings by the radical proslavery intellectuals, since the goals of southern economic development could not be realized without economic independence and the guarantee of southern rights in the Union. The convention at Vicksburg, Mississippi, thus resolved among other economic measures, to the reopening of the African slave trade from which the South and Southwest could furnish a sufficient labor force for their thriving plantation economy. It was this convention that appointed James D.B. De Bow as the president of the newly created organization, "The African Labor Supply Association." The two objectives of the movement to reopen the African slave trade were to bring the Africans out of the darkness and put them in a proper social organization that enabled them to improve their race by exposing it to the progress of the civilized world, and to benefit the American people by providing them the best form of labor in abundant quantities. De Bow elaborated on the justification for this association by pointing to the acute problem of a labor shortage resulting from the expansion of almost boundless territory within the South and Southwest, which could be adapted to rich and productive cultivation. The increasing demand and enhanced prices of goods produced in those areas, and the rise in the "value" of slave labor as the only species capable of working there, thus led to greater demand for slaves.

De Bow argued that at this time the natural increase of black slaves in the South was too slow, and the increase of population in a country should not rely only on this source but, like the North, should also gain from immigration. It was necessary, De Bow argued, for the South to promote the migration of labor from other areas and since European immigrants had not been able to acclimatize or adapt to southern conditions, it was necessary that these laborers must be

⁴⁴ *De Bow's Review* 8 (February 1850), 161.

⁴⁵ De Bow, "The Origin, Progress and Prospects of Slavery," 15.

African slaves. Underlying the proposal to reopen the African slave trade was another important question "whether it may be right to bring the negro by compulsion to a life of labor."⁴⁶ To answer this question, De Bow and the advocates of the slave trade chose to confront the liberal bourgeois philosophy at the root of the two ideologies. De Bow admitted that by now it was obvious that the North and South were two distinct and antagonistic forms of society contesting within the Union. Leonidas Spratt of South Carolina, who was almost the first to open the discussion of the foreign slave trade to the public, declared that the existing sectional conflict in the Union was essentially the contest, not between sections, but systems; not between nations, but ideas. It was a contest "between the idea proclaimed at the North, that equality is the right of man, and the idea embodied to some extent at the South, that it is the right of equals only." In other words, it was a contest between the forms of a pure and a slave democracy.

The North assumed that all men are equal and that equality is right while the South assumed that since all men are not equal, equality is not right. De Bow conceived equality as the most noble thing that allows one to enjoy "personal security, personal liberty, and private liberty," and, equally, equality that allowed one to have a reciprocal obligation with others so that one could observe the "three great principles of the Justinian code, *honeste vivere, alternum non laedere, suum cuique tribuere*."⁴⁷ De Bow fiercely attacked such "specious declarations" and "abasement of reason," like "human rights," "freedom of opinion," "equality of mankind" and things of this nature which were "peculiar to the age." He wrote that the revolutions in England⁴⁸ had bequeathed the Americans with a legacy of "equal rights" as manifested in Jefferson's thought that "men were all sovereign, free and independent born" and in Thomas Cooper's indictment of the cruelty of slavery. De Bow challenged the Jeffersonian assertion by asking for proof of such experiences. Where was the "boasted independence and equality of

⁴⁶ [Leonidas W. Spratt,] "Report on the Slave Trade," *De Bow's Review* 24 (June 1858), 473.

⁴⁷ "Characteristics of Statesmen," *Southern Quarterly Review* 6 (July 1844), 105; the article was published again in *De Bow's Review* 20 (January 1856), 29-55.

⁴⁸ De Bow probably meant the English Civil War in the 1640's since Charlestonians had great interest in the Puritan Revolution. See George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), 100.

mankind. He continued "it is an utopian delusion, the nursling of a warmed imagination and plaything of an ambitious demagogue."⁴⁹

To counter those liberal ideas, De Bow utilized the concept of a fixed order of nature and the world following the creation of God. He argued that God had not created man to be equal. Men were neither born to equal possessions, nor with equal powers of mind and body. Men were born to be rulers or ruled. Nature had endowed a ruler with the will, avarice, and ambition. How many were there in the world? "Enough to rule it," and they are at last the masters of mankind." Look at the "sickly, emaciated, and penn[i]less sufferer" who, with "all poor-mindless-spiritless-surf," was "nature's freak." He was destined to be nothing more than a slave, "and of this sort is the mass of mankind." According to De Bow, equality therefore is not a natural right but an artificial one, because it is originated in society for the purpose of keeping society in order and advancing it to a higher stage. Equality is meaningful among the equals and the privileged who have the genius, learning and arts to elevate it.

Like other southern political economists, De Bow maintained slavery is both "personal" and "property." In consideration of slaves, he said the "personal character of the slave," or his rank as an element of population, must come before the idea of slavery as a property relation. Here De Bow wanted to argue against northern criticisms of slave labor as mere chattel. He said that "property gives the absolute power and control, not only over, but in, the subject, without any limitation or restraint, except so far as the rights of others shall not be interfered with." In this sense, the master could do anything with the slave, including destroying him at will. This De Bow said was not the case in the plantation South. Actually, no such power was or had been claimed or exercised over the slave because it was against Christian teaching. In essence, the power of the master over the slave was only that of "controlling his labor" and the master was entitled to use all the means necessary for that purpose. This was no worse than the capitalist who also had absolute power over the bread of the free laborer and his entire family.⁵⁰

Yet De Bow realized that slavery also implied property in legal status, but not in social relations. In 1857, De Bow published extracts from the acts of the Continental Congress

⁴⁹ "Random Thoughts on Slavery," in *De Bow Papers*, DU.

⁵⁰ "The Origin, Progress and Prospects of Slavery," 9-10.

to "show the ignorance or perfidy of those who are now pretending that negroes were not recognized as property by the men who framed the present Federal Constitution." The acts stipulated that South Carolina and Georgia would pay the proprietors of such Negroes as should be enlisted for the services of the United States, during the Revolutionary War, "*a full compensation for the property*, at a sale not exceeding one thousand dollars for each active able bodied negro man of standard size not exceeding thirty-five years of age."⁵¹ Southerners, therefore, never held on to only a one-sided definition of slavery as mere chattel.⁵²

An interesting development in the proslavery ideas in the late fifties was the use of sociology and anthropology to support the racial arguments that blacks were inferior and that the slave system was the best social organization for men.⁵³ To be sure, the idea that Negro slaves were racially inferior to whites was not novel.⁵⁴ But what the advocates of the foreign slave trade introduced into the proslavery argument was the recognition that the two unequal races had to live together in the same country, as designed by God. De Bow published many articles and reports from anthropologists and travel accounts showing the degrading condition of free blacks and ex-slaves in the North and the recently emancipated countries in the West Indies. He found that the death or extinction of blacks tended to occur in the monarchical form of government, as in the British colonies in the West Indies islands. "This was not the fault of the negroes; they were under the control of their masters. Left to themselves they are, so far as facts can guide the

⁵¹ *De Bow's Review* 23 (July 1857), 104.

⁵² The two common practices that testified to the "personal" character of slavery in the Old South were the "peculium" of slaves and the slave-hiring. The peculium or Negroes' Crop, sometimes amounted to \$1,424, belonged to the slaves. "Plantation Life-Duties and Responsibilities," *De Bow's Review* 29 (1860), 362.

⁵³ It is interesting to note that De Bow published more articles and reports on the inferior race of black slaves from 1854 to 1860 than any other period.

⁵⁴ See William S. Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); and Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1987).

inquirer, alike incapable of rational republican or monarchical government." The same misfortune fell upon free blacks, too. "Emancipation," De Bow asserted, "suddenly arrests their vital progress, longevity, psychological energy and physical improvement." Moreover, insanity, idiocy, pauperism, disease, short life and speedy death, said De Bow, everywhere marked the downward progress of free blacks; except those in New Orleans where *De Bow's Review* was published. He quoted De Tocqueville that if the slave becomes free, independence was often felt by him to be a heavier burden than slavery. Also, the prejudices of the whites against the blacks increased in proportion as slavery was abolished.⁵⁵

The work of Dr. Josiah Nott, a southern physician and racial theorist, influenced much of De Bow's thinking on the human race, particularly the theory of the diverse origin of races. According to the theory, the Negro was "not of the common origin with the Caucasian." He quickly drew political implications from polygenesis. If the races of men had a common origin, he reasoned, then a single political system might be applied to all as well as the same laws and institutions in every state and condition of civilization. But if the races were created separately then modern institutions like parliament and Congress were "unsuited to the Hottentot and the African."⁵⁶ Later he published Dr. Josiah Nott's address delivered before the Southern Rights' Association of Mobile, on the "Natural History of Man in Connection with Negro Slavery," which emphasized the ethnological evidence of Negro inferiority and incapacity for civilization, that is, the nature of slaves was the lowest in the scale of human beings and incapable of self-government. It was evident that their destiny was to be slaves in white society because their fate binds with whites' in the development of modern civilization. The abstract notions of liberty and freedom for slaves would not be advantageous to the union of unequal races because free blacks posed more danger to whites.

De Bow agreed with Nott in the answer which Dr. Nott made to those who "are ever crying 'peace, peace, and compromise for peace.'" De Bow contended that "The Constitution itself, the Missouri line, etc. etc., were all compromises between the North and the South, and

⁵⁵ *De Bow's Review* 7 (August 1849), 171; De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, I, 33, 386, 405, as quoted by De Bow.

⁵⁶ "Physical Character of the Negro," *De Bow's Review* 9 (September 1850), 231. See the biography of Nott by Reginald Horsman, *Josiah Nott of Mobile: Southerner, Physician, and Racial Theorist* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).

how have their compromises been respected?"⁵⁷ For De Bow, the moral issue of slavery was long gone; instead he was debating about which, slave or free, was the best form of human organization that promised the most peaceful union of two unequal races together with the rapid progress of the country. To the advocates of the African slave trade, one thing was clear, that is, their willingness to face the reality of the presence of blacks in the South and to share their destiny with those inferior slaves.

But how should the union of two unequal races occur? Certainly, L.W. Spratt, a leading spokesman of the reopening of the African slave trade said, it should occur in relations of inequality, "for it is a law of the same great architect that, if unequal in fact, they must be unequal in relations--that bodies of unequal gravity must rest upon unequal levels--that oil and water poured into the same vessel must settle in plains of unequal elevation." Therefore, said Spratt, it would seem that in this form of social constitution there was not only no wrong, but that it conformed to nature's law, if nature be true to herself, that superior power must find its office in superior position.⁵⁸

In his attempts to criticize democracy as the political theory of free society, De Bow and the advocates of the slave trade argued that, although democracy had been regarded as the ideal of the age, it did not prove that human society was intended to be democratic, that is, one of absolute rights and equality. He contended that democracy never was a proper form of social system, because in the past an "unarticulated mass" had ever yet "commenced the march of social movement." The rise of civilized states always exhibited the "condition of unequal classes;" citizens and slaves in Greece, patricians and plebeians in Rome, peers and villains in England, nobles and peasants in Central Europe, and "generally wherever there has been social power and progress there has been articulation--a ruling and subject class, if not a ruling and a subject race--an artificial if not a natural dualism."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ J. C. Nott, "Nature and Destiny of the Negro," *De Bow's Review* 10 (March 1851), 332; and William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 158.

⁵⁸ "Report on the Slave Trade," 474.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 475.

De Bow did not object to social mobility of individual members of different classes, that the noble should sometimes come down and the peasant should rise, for it proved that social inequality was artificial, but he did not believe that the unarticulated mass should all march to power. Moreover, social change showed that these social "distinctions were unnatural, not that they were unnecessary--not that inequality is wrong, but only that political inequality cannot endure without the natural fitness to sustain it." Human history had shown that to social order and social progress there was the "necessity for social articulation and a ruled and ruling class, and that without unequal races these distinctions are not to be perpetuated." The advocates of the slave trade thus contended that democracy and the free labor were not the final constitution of society. Although the future forms of society had not yet been determined, it was likely that this future society would assume some of the forms it had already achieved, and the slave society stood the better chance for the future since it had in the past created civilization and progress. In the final argument, if the union of unequal races was right, then the means to its formation must also be correct. The acceptance of slavery as the best social system, therefore, "in principle and effect an affirmation of the foreign slave trade."⁶⁰

In a bold statement, advocates of the foreign slave trade like L. W. Spratt even suggested that the measure necessary to the South must meet the double issues, the emancipation of the North from the domination of free labor, and thus the spread and triumph of domestic slavery in the Union. To achieve the independence of the North, the South must give them the means of political power. But to the triumph of domestic slavery, it must give to that the means of progress, the moral strength of a proslavery attitude, which could admit no wrong and no sense of shame. The only measure that met these conditions, De Bow and other advocates of the movement thought, was conceived to be the foreign slave trade.

The latter phase of De Bow's proslavery ideas thus centered on the racial arguments based, among others, on sociology and anthropology upon which he and other radical proslavery theorists built the theory of slavery as a universal form of social organization competing with the emerging free labor social system. The use of racial arguments in his proslavery ideas was not,

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 475-6.

as historians have asserted,⁶¹ to circumvent the moral issue of slavery and free-trade economics, but to confirm his long-held beliefs that slavery, as ordained by God, is an institution suitable for the naturally inferior race and, as a social system, for the union with whites in an unequal relation. His racial arguments therefore were not meant for racial discriminations as we understand them now, but to provide with scientific arguments the best social system capable of carrying the historical task into the growing prosperous and Christian world.

⁶¹ See Mark Hall, "The Proslavery Thought of J.D.B. De Bow: A Practical Man's Guide to Economics," *Southern Studies* 21 (Spring 1982), 98; and James L. Huston, "The Panic of 1857, Southern Economic Thought, and the Patriarchal Defense of Slavery," 163-86.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This study assumes that the slave society of the Old South was different from the industrializing North. Moreover, southern society created its powerful regional ruling class and developed its own world view which gradually became antithetical to that of the North and western Europe. This study therefore emphasizes the world view of the slaveholders by which I mean their social philosophy in relation to the political, social, and economic development of the South. Without acknowledging the slaveholders' world view, it is unlikely that one can see the logic and rationality of the proslavery ideology. The study of De Bow's economic and proslavery ideas shows that his ideas were informed by the world view of the slaveholders.

Instead of focusing exclusively on De Bow's economic ideas and analyzing the validity of his economic theory, the study first locates economic thought in relation to the existing political and social ideologies of the Old South. By studying De Bow's ideas within the framework of the slaveholders' world view, one can see a certain consistency and integrity in his thought. This was clear in his views on slavery as a proper social order and his commitment to a defense of the southern way of life.

In De Bow's times, the issue of slavery was not exclusively an economic issue. Nor was it solely a political or religious question. It was, in fact, a combination of all of them. It is necessary therefore in studying De Bow's proslavery ideas that one should see them in relation to his religious, political, and economic thought. Essentially De Bow based his social philosophy on the organic view of society, that some men assumed major responsibility for the lives and well-being of others.¹ Accordingly, he held that all men are created unequal in their constitutions and must depend on others for their survival. He maintained that man is a

¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Fruits of Merchant Capital: Slavery and Bourgeois Property in the Rise and Expansion of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 397-398.

dependent animal for he has to rely on the will of others for his existence in society. Free will and freedom of individuals must be sacrificed or limited in return for social protection and support. Importantly, he believed that holding property in human beings is also natural and just.²

To be sure, De Bow did not see exploitation in the institution of slavery which, he believed, was designed by God to protect an inferior race from being exterminated by a superior one. In this sense, slavery can be seen as a civilizing institution for it brought black slaves to live together with whites in a modern society. With this belief De Bow could reconcile his proslavery ideas with the idea of progress. For De Bow, it was not class conflict but sympathy among unequals that moved society to a higher level. Inequality among men, De Bow argued, led to the formation of society and served as the basis for the institution of reciprocal relationships.

When De Bow conceived the elements of political economy differently from northerners and the classical political economists, he did not err as a result of intellectual laziness. Rather he was informed by his society and its world view. From the beginning he tried to redefine the subject of political economy in order to promote public good and harmony of interests among social classes. Although he followed many of Ricardo's economic doctrines, De Bow disagreed with the fundamental tenets of class conflict between landlords and capitalists and the problems of profits, rent, and wages, which characterized classical political economy. Following his ideas that there was no class conflict in the South, De Bow contended that private wealth was not the economic goal of any class in the South. His application of the concept of wealth reflected his commitment to the preservation of the social order of the South. The same was true for his concepts of labor, capital, and value, through which he argued for a prosperity without exploitation and social progress without class struggle.

Central to De Bow's social ideas was the belief that there was and had been only one general form of social relations throughout history: the master-slave relation. It appeared, however, under different names, such as the relations between lord-servant in Medieval period and capitalist-free laborer in modern times. Underlying this variety of forms was the continuing

² See the contrast between the slaveholders' world view and the capitalist world view in Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 124-25.

reciprocal relationship between the one who labors and the other who provides protection and care for the laborer. De Bow believed there were two forms of labor at all times--"hired men and bondsmen." The one worked for his master on a temporary basis, the other for life. In justifying the slave system, he stressed the dependent relations between the slave and the master. Under slavery, he said, capital and labor were in harmony because they were dependent on each other. In this world view, therefore, it was possible for De Bow to see that there was no such thing as exploitation of labor in the slavery system.

In his defense of slavery as a social system, De Bow expressed his concerns toward nonslaveholders and poor whites of the South. For the South to be able to maintain its institutions, he believed that the well-being of the nonslaveholders and poor whites were necessary conditions. He realized that the slaveholding class had the most direct interest in the preservation of plantation economy in the South. Yet he always reminded the slaveholders that the well-being of every class in the South was a necessary condition for the progress and prosperity of the South. He advocated that masters should accept the responsibilities and duties of Christian morality and provide for the welfare and necessities of the slaves. For the nonslaveholders, he stressed the need to diversify the plantation economy. In order to open up economic opportunities for nonslaveholders and poor whites, he advocated using slave labor in manufacturing industries and investing landed capital in manufacturing and commerce. Expanded economic opportunity for nonslaveholders was De Bow's political objective in his call for an "industrial revolution" in the South. He had no desire to see the South industrialized like the North or England. For De Bow, the economic development of the South was not an end in itself, but rather, it was the precondition for the preservation of the institution of slavery, which, in turn, guaranteed the existence of the southern society.

Central to De Bow's economic thought was the idea of slavery. In fact slavery, conceived as a social system, was probably the single most influential idea in determining his economic thought. His early proslavery ideas, based upon the Biblical arguments and Enlightenment philosophy, viewed slavery as a "positive good." This was a position he maintained throughout his life. In the 1850s De Bow's proslavery ideas were influenced by the increased sectional conflicts, and expanded to incorporate scientific and racial arguments in the defense of slavery as the best state of social organization.

For De Bow, the moral question of slavery was a non-issue. Instead, when he engaged in debates about slavery, he was concerned primarily about which form of human organization, slave or free, offered the best prospect for the peaceful union of two unequal races. To De Bow one thing was clear, the future of the Old South was inseparable from that of blacks. And the destiny of the whites had to be shared with that of the blacks. He found his answer to the "union of two unequal races" in the institution of slavery, which, he claimed was the most natural form of human organization. It was suitable, not only for the South and the North, but also for all modern world civilization. With this proposition De Bow moved the proslavery ideas from the particular to the general, and from a concern with Negro slave labor to a concern with labor in the abstract.³

James D. B. De Bow might not be a great thinker of the Old South, but he certainly left an important legacy from a critical moment in the history of the United States. He and other southern intellectuals engaged in the movement to defend their way of life and a proper social order based on the institution of slavery. With respect to his times and circumstances, De Bow's social and economic ideas should be seen in light of his society and its "peculiar" development as a slaveholding society in the modern era. His ideas, like his society, were full of paradoxes; he believed in conservatism yet he was committed to the idea of progress, he defended slavery as a social system but he also argued for an "industrial revolution." Although we can fault him on many of his ideas regarding the economic development of the South, we hardly can doubt the sincerity in his advocacy for the prosperity of the South based upon the balanced development of manufacturing, commerce, and agriculture. In retrospect, De Bow's ideas represented a world that cherished the value of sympathy and reciprocal relations, of sensibility and moderation between matter and mind. His world thus was necessarily antithetical to the emerging capitalist world which cherished the value of pure reason and positive laws, of market relations and propertied individualism.

³ See the salient aspects of the history of the proslavery argument in Eugene D. Genovese, *The World the Slaveholders Made*, 118; and Drew Faust, ed. with an introduction, *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Old South, 1830-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 1-20.

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